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QUIET TALKS ON HOW TO PRAY

S. D. GORDON'S
QUIET TALKS

Quiet Talks on Power
Quiet Talks on Prayer
Quiet Talks on Service

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QUIET TALKS
ON
HOW TO PRAY

By
S. D. GORDON
Author of "Quiet Talks on Power," "Quiet Talks on Simple Essentials," etc.

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PREFACE

PRAYER is as simple as a-b-c. And it is as profound as the deepest metaphysical problem. And yet, deep though it is in its philosophy, it still is simple in its workings.

A child can pray. And the rarest saint, with the greatest brain, and the finest mental discipline, and the ripest experience in prayer, finds ground lying beyond untouched as yet.

Prayer is like life; it is a school. You can begin with the cradle roll, or the kindergarten. And you may go on, course after course, and always the final post-graduate course is still ahead of you.

And prayer does make a difference, too big for words to tell. It changes the man who prays, if he lets it. And it makes changes outside, in events, and circumstances, and character, and life.

At heart prayer is partnership. It means a man and God, our Lord Jesus, working together for the one thing. Yes, it is deeper and more tender than that. It is friendship. These same two, knit together in the strong tie of personal affection, absorbed in the same intense driving objective.

S. D. G.

New York.

CONTENTS

Part I

THE HOW AND WHY OF PRAYER

I.	Some Simple Suggestions about Praying	7
II.	The "Thanks" Knot on the End	24
III.	Going Deeper and Climbing Higher, or Five Steps of Growth in Prayer . . .	45
IV.	Something about God's Will in Prayer	65
V.	How Prayer Actually Works, or the Process in Prayer . .	80

Part II

SOME OF THE OLD MASTERS AT PRAYER

VI.	David in a Fog, and How He Got Out	100
VII.	Elijah on Carmel	122
VIII.	Paul on His Knees in Rome .	158

PART I

The How and Why of Prayer

I

SOME SIMPLE SUGGESTIONS ABOUT PRAYING

Failure Doesn't Disturb Principles.

EVERYBODY prays, sometime, somehow. Need pulls a man to his knees, either actual knees or what amounts to that. There is something inside every man that makes him lift up his inner heart to some One unseen when the sore pinch comes. Use whatever words you please the fact of prayer is as widespread as man.

Religion is the longing within man's heart after God. It is in every man, everywhere. It is really the pull-back toward God within every man's spirit. Sin is the pull-away. Religion is really the inner pull-back.

Religions are the attempts, faulty, ignorant, superstition-blinded, dust-blurred, swamp-fogged, attempts to get back in touch with God.

The Gospel of Christ is God's own answer to that longing in man's inner heart. It is not a religion merely; it is *the* religion; the one true religion.

It is the one true full telling of how things actually stand between us men and God, and of how they may be changed back to the first original true relation.

Prayer is the natural expression of that long-

ing in every man's heart. In various parts of the earth, under the various religions taught, it takes on the faults and ignorances, the superstitions of all these religions.

The Gospel of Christ makes simple and clear just what real prayer is, cleared of these bad growths, and what its true natural place is.

The Bible, this solitary old Book of God, pictures these three things, namely, the tense inner longing for touch with God, the faulty attempts, everywhere and always, to get in touch, and the one true way to get in touch through Jesus Christ.

God *answers* prayer. This is the fact of prayer. This is the one only satisfactory statement about prayer.

A little child kneels at the mother's knees, and asks for something needed. And some One unseen bends down over the child, and does as the child asks, because the child asks.

A woman, busy about her tasks, feels an inner pull-away to her knees about some need pressing sore in her life. And the Man unseen stoops gently over, listens with deep concern, and does as the woman asks, because she asks.

A man in the thick of the day's work, maybe in the jostle of traffic, feels a strong inner pull within his spirit to prayer because of some tense need crowding in on him. He can't go off alone just then. So a prayer goes up, within, "on the fly," brief, intense, very real.

And again that some One unseen by outer eyes draws closer, listens intently, feels deeply, and does what the man asks, because the man asks.

This is the great simple fact of prayer. It gets things done that otherwise wouldn't be done. It changes things that need changing, and that otherwise would go unchanged, to somebody's damage.

It does *us* good to pray. That's true enough, blessedly true. Everybody that thinks at all about the thing agrees to that much. Men that won't go further will go this far.

But that is the smaller part of prayer. It isn't small. It's never small. Yet when the other side, the outside part, is weighed and counted and foot-ruled it is seen that this inside part is distinctly smaller, the less part, in count and weight and measure.

Prayer actually gets things done. The things need doing. People are helped decidedly by their being done. They can't be done in any other way. They haven't been. For it takes power to get them done.

That power isn't at hand in any other way. Prayer swings into action, down in the circumstances of our lives, the power that actually gets these things done.

This is the fact of prayer, the simple, undeniable fact of prayer. The results actually gotten cannot be denied. Hard hearts soften, stubborn wills bend, problems solve, questions are answered, a roadway opens up before your eyes where there was none, sickness gives way to health, money loosens out that had been fast locked up. This is the simple fact of prayer.

Of course, countless prayers go up that bring nothing down. But that doesn't affect the prin-

ciple of prayer, not by as much as the half-batting of your eyelid.

Your clock stops and refuses to start up again, with all your tinkering. But its failure doesn't affect the principle of the clock. You still run your day pretty much by the clock on the mantel or in your pocket. You haven't lost faith in clocks to tell the time of day and night.

The telephone fails to connect. The radio blurs up because of something in the air they call "static." But these things still play a pretty big part in our every-day life, do they not?

Any failure to fit into the principle of the clock, or of the telephone, or of the radio, or of prayer, will bring failure to get the immediate results desired. It's some loose screw on the human side of things that holds up train, and steamer, and automobile. We simply go at finding what; and fixing it.

Does the train ever fail to get you in on time? Or the steamer? Or the automobile balk and stop and refuse to go for you? But these things still play a big place in your daily life.

And it will be found always that the same principle precisely controls in the far higher realm of prayer. There is a screw loose somewhere. There's some failure to fit in, or some opposition trying to balk the effective working.

How To Begin.

Just now we want to talk together a little about the simple principles that underlie prayer. And they are so simple that any one may get in

line and make use of this great power if he will; simply that, *if he will.*

For these qualities that prayer calls for are all qualities of the heart or will. It's really a matter of choosing to have it so. The power is tingling now at your finger tips. You can reach out and have it, *if you will.*

It's not a matter of brain power, nor special ability, nor education, nor the social standing of your family, rarely valuable as these things are. It's entirely a matter of an earnest eager willingness.

And the one big simple principle that lies at the very root of the thing is this: come into touch with Jesus Christ. Accept him as your Saviour. Trust his cleansing blood to clear up your sin score. Yield to him as your Master. Begin to companion with him as your greatest fellow human, your true real Friend.

All this can become more real to you in the daily habit of conduct and life. The fact of that touch can begin at once, now, *if you will.*

This is the beginning of prayer. It is very simple, but it is absolutely essential. It's really as eating and breathing and walking and sleeping are to your bodily health, simple, very simple, and essential, absolutely essential.

Then there are five simple things if you are to *grow* in praying. One must not stay in the kindergarten. The mother is eager to have the baby walk; a step or two; by and by all alone, even if a bit wobbly. It's startling how full the prayer kindergarten is of those that belong higher up, if they would only climb.

The *first* of these things is *time.* Like everything else prayer needs time; daily time, like the other essentials, sleeping and eating. It should be quiet time. It needs to be time enough to forget how much time it is, even though duties call you away.

So, it must be planned for, sometimes well ahead, so no duty is slighted, but time gotten for this. One must *take* time. He hasn't time, likely enough in the pressure of things. It must be taken; taken from something else; something else important, yet less important.

No one worth while has time for all that comes crowding to his door. Something must be left out. So it's a matter of practical sense in leaving the less important things out, and *taking time for this.* Prayer does need time.

The *second* thing prayer needs is *a place.* You can pray anywhere, on a train, walking down street, measuring calico, chopping a typewriter, dictating a letter, in kitchen or parlour or shop. But you're not likely to, unless you've been off in some quiet place, with the door shut.

Jesus said, "enter into thine inner chamber." He was an Oriental, humanly. And if an Oriental could say "inner chamber," the man in the western hemisphere can actually get an inner chamber.

For the Orient does not have privacy, characteristically, as a rule. There are always exceptions. Personal privacy is really a trait of the western world, characteristically. The very domestic architecture of the two hemispheres reveals this striking difference.

Though it does seem as though the Orient is crowding into the western world in this matter. We seem to be all turning Parisians, living out in the boulevards, in the bustle and noise of the street.

We're losing the fine touch of personal privacy out of our lives so much. Yes, and losing the fine fragrance and gentleness and real personal power out of our lives, too, so largely.

Prayer needs a place, an inner chamber, with a door, and the door shut, outside things shut out, and ourselves shut in with some One unseen.

It doesn't matter where that place is. The corner of a kitchen is as good as the cloistered corner of a cathedral. Indeed some kitchens I have known are better than some cathedrals I have been in. It's the recognized presence of our blessed Lord that makes either holy ground, kitchen or cathedral.

I think likely the walls of that Nazareth carpenter shop, or the slope of that hilltop in early morning or twilight, could give us many a helpful hint about praying. *Prayer needs a place.*

Our Lord said, "Thy Father *who seeth in secret.*" When you go alone into that inner corner you're not alone. There's some One else there. The more alone you are so far as others are concerned, the less alone you are so far as he is concerned.

And the real rare blessing of the daily quiet place is, not that you actually pray, though you will; not that you read the Book; though you will.

It is this: there's some One else there. And

to sit quiet in his presence, thank him that he is there, and that he died for you in the love of his heart; maybe to sing him a soft hymn of praise, this is the real blessedness of that bit of quiet time in the shut-away corner. Prayer needs a place, and prayer hallows the place, any place.

A Course in Ear Culture.

Then prayer needs a book, *the Book.* The Book is the basis of prayer. There's an answer in one's inner spirit, any one's, to the living spirit of the Book.

Of course, the Book has been warped and twisted, ignored and scoffed at, burned up and cut up, quoted out of connection, and half-quoted, misquoted, covered up with vulgar dust and fine cultured scholarly dust, world without end, and the earth without fence. One can easily understand who's back of all that sort of thing. Some one who hates the book, and is slavishly afraid of it.

The striking thing is that whether burned up in olden times, or cut up in more modern times, with lancet knives and skilled highly financed fingers, it remains without the smell of fire or the mark of knife.

The rarest true scholarship and culture, Spirit-illumined, have but made its meaning clearer and simpler and more telling.

It is most striking, in the thick of the cross-currents to-day, to note the rare evidence of the Holy Spirit's inspiration from the first page to the last.

An accurate translation of the actual text of

the creation story in Genesis is found to fit exactly into the latest findings of true science, biology and geology.

Quite clearly there is no progressive revelation, in the teaching of morals, nor of God's love. The flood-light of both morals and God's love is in the Eden story.

Those Ten Horeb Commands were written in Adam's heart in Eden, and in every man's since. They are put into such detailed shape, at the smoking flaming mount, because being ignored and scoffed by the whole race.

The gruesome details of immorality prohibited in the Wildness books, Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy, are a looking-glass, reflecting the awful conditions common everywhere in the world at that time.

The heart that actually broke on Calvary is heart-broken with grief at the gates of Eden. The language actually used makes quite clear that it is a broken-hearted God that is planning racial salvage in that Sixth of Genesis.

Simple paraphrasing, though so laboriously exacting for strict accuracy, is immensely helpful in understanding in homely plain English, just what is being said.

A broad historical perspective, and a clear discernment of the moral issues involved, make it quite clear that the so-called massacres and cruelties, enjoined upon the Israelites in their warfare on the displaced Canaanites, are simply racial surgery.

The unspeakably terrible moral conditions necessitated drastic measures to keep the race

alive. The skilled surgeon, thrusting the keen edged knife into diseased vitals, is bent on saving the man's life. He is recognized as a rare humanitarian.

Yet some ignorant person, who had never heard of surgery, coming suddenly into the operating room, and being told that the person on the table was alive, as he saw the surgeon plunge his knife into the patient's vitals, would likely charge the surgeon with intent to kill the patient.

The few passages in the Psalms that seem to the unthinking man to breathe out a spirit of hatred, are found to be the intolerant hatred of purity toward impurity. Broad perspective makes this quite clear. Our Saviour's words fit exactly into these so-called imprecatory Psalms.[1]

The Book throughout is all athrob with a broken-hearted love that gives itself out to the utmost to save man from himself.

In the early years of Moody's career in England, he had been invited up to London, to meet the ministers. Word had come of the remarkable results of his meetings in Yorkshire. Several hundred ministers gathered in London to meet this man, whom God was using so exceptionally. In the rapid fire of questions, one man said, "Mr. Moody, what is your creed?"

Quick as a flash, Mr. Moody quietly said, "My creed is in print."

A chorus of voices called out, "Where?" and several hundred pencils came out to write down the title of the book containing Moody's creed.

[1] Matthew 10:34–37. Luke 14:26.

Very quietly Mr. Moody replied, "It is in the Fifty-third of Isaiah, 'he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities . . . with his stripes we are healed.'"

With his rare fidelity to the old Gospel, and his rarely keen mentality, Moody had touched, with one quick incisive stroke, the whole throbbing heart of the old Book of God.

Now, this Book is the basis of all prayer. Bible reading is the listening side of prayer. In the Book God speaks to us. In prayer we speak to God. What he says to us radically affects what we say to him.

Prayer needs three organs of the face or head, an ear, a tongue, and an eye. The ear to hear what God says, the tongue to repeat his promises as our petitions, and the eye to look out expectantly until the result comes.

The ear comes first. The ear controls the tongue, where the faculties are naturally developed. What goes in at the ear comes out at the tongue. The little child repeats the words just as they come into the ear from the mother's tongue, whether French or German, Bulgarian or Chinese or English.

Thoughtful Bible reading is giving God our ears. What goes in at the ear, warmed up as it goes through the heart, comes out at the tongue, in simple expectant warm prayer, communion and petition and intercession.

God spoke in this Book; he speaks in it. It was inspired in a distinctive way, true of no other book; it is inspired. There is a living spirit in the Book.

There is a Voice speaking out of these pages to-day, soft as the dews of Hermon, clear as the vibrant tones of a bell. There is a Hand reaching out of these pages, and reaching clear into conscience and heart. There is a Face here looking into your face.

Give this Book its place in your prayer. What God says here will wholly change what you will say, and so wholly change the results. The Book will shape and mould your praying. Let it.

Openness of Mind.

The *fourth* suggestion is as simple as these, and yet it should be emphasized. *Let the Teacher teach you.* There is one who is peculiarly the prayer teacher. Do you know who he is? *the Holy Spirit.*

It is he that puts the desire to pray in our hearts. He will direct all our praying, as a teacher the scholar, as a wise father his son.

Where is the Holy Spirit? May I answer that question very simply, to make the thing quite clear? He is here in me; and he is there inside you, if you have let him come in.

He is in every one whose heart has opened to the Lord Jesus. It is not so because we are good or deserving or saintly. It is because he is faithful.

The Holy Spirit is Jesus' other self. He is Jesus' successor in us down here. He comes to do in us all that Jesus did for us.

Jesus speaks interchangeably of himself and the Holy Spirit. In that Betrayal-night Talk he says, "He (the Father) will give you another

Comforter." Then he says, speaking of the same thing, "*I* come unto you."[1]

Let the Holy Spirit teach you. He is eager to. When you go into the quiet schoolroom, in the quiet bit of school time, with the school book open, ask this teacher to teach you. And he will. You may be a bit slow and stupid. Very likely. Most of us are. But he is very gentle and patient.

You will likely find your praying change some. It will become simpler. It will become more confident, and personal, and practical. It will be more like a scholar talking with a revered teacher, or a child to a loved father or mother.

Some things you will quit asking for, and thinking about. They will slip out of your thoughts in that presence. Other things will come in. Certain things you will pray for more boldly and confidently and expectantly.

The *fifth* suggestion needs emphasis. It needs emphasis because some of us are a bit set in our own way. It is this: *Cultivate an openness of spirit.* I mean that habitual openness of mind that opens up more, and then more, as clearer light breaks in.

It begins with that first surrender to Jesus Christ as Master. That's opening up to him, the first opening up, the great start of all.

Then there should be the habitual surrender in the actual practice of daily life. As clearer light comes in, on this habit, that line of conduct, this old question, that problem, you actually live the surrender you made in that initial act.

[1] John 14: 16–23. Note the entire passage.

It is quite a tug with most of us to make that initial surrender a habitual thing. Yet, of course, there is no surrender at all unless it is habitual in all.

This means that one gets into the habit of cultivating openness of mind, to any and every bit of light, that may come from any quarter. What a rare thing! Rare in its scarcity, and rare in its preciousness.

Stubbornness, sifted down, is simply refusing to yield to the new bit of light that comes. Openness to light is the one doorway to growth.

And, at heart, this openness is really loyalty to our Lord Jesus, our Saviour, who gave his life clear out for us.

In our eagerness to be loyal to him, we'll welcome light from any candlestick or tallow dip, however lowly. We'll pore thoughtfully over the Book, to get its meaning clear. We'll cultivate the thoughtful sane wholesome brooding, meditating, to get things clear, and clearer.

These are the five simple suggestions about praying, a praying *time,* a prayer *place,* the prayer *Book,* the prayer *teacher,* the Holy Spirit, the habitual intelligent *openness* to more light. Let us all start in to school afresh.

The Knee Habit.

About fifty-five or six years ago, a young fellow went up to New York to make his fortune, if he could. His home was in a little university town in Georgia. He had had experience in journalism, and expected to make his way in New York as a newspaper reporter.

But the editorial doors in New York all proved to have rusty hinges. They still have. They would not open to his touch, try as he would. And the days wore away, and the funds wore down, and things began to look desperate.

At last, one day, an inner editorial door-knob did turn to his touch. And he found himself facing the managing editor of one of the largest and most prominent of the New York morning dailies.

"From Georgia? Hmm! Know anything about cotton?" There was an exciting flurry just then in the cotton market. Well, this young fellow knew all about cotton. He came from the cotton country. Cotton was a-b-c to him.

But he modestly replied, "I think I know something about cotton, sir." "Write me a story on the present cotton situation; four hundred words; have it in at four o'clock; if it goes, it'll appear as an unsigned editorial tomorrow morning." And the editor turned abruptly back to his desk.

And the young man didn't know whether his feet touched the ground or not, as he walked out. His chance had come. That was all he wanted, a chance. The rest was easy.

He went to his little cheap hall bedroom, drew over some paper, sharpened a few pencils, and settled down to write. That would be an easy job.

But the strain on his nerves, with uncertainty, and diminishing funds, and long tiresome waiting, had been harder than he had realized. And the words wouldn't come.

The stuff wouldn't write. It was exasperating. His brain was full of the thing, but he simply couldn't get it out on the paper. What do you know about that? Some of us know a lot about it.

It must come. He had a good square jaw, and he resolutely locked it and seized the pencil anew. No, it didn't come. Things looked desperate. His chance had come at last, and yet he was balked, and couldn't use it.

But he had a good mother back there in that little Georgia town, an old-fashioned mother. She had taught him the use of his knees in boyhood. Blessed boy with a mother like that! Blessed mother who taught her boy the use of his knees!

And now he slipped to his knees at the edge of the table. He didn't say much. The words are apt to be fewest when your spirit is tensest. The bended form was a big part of the prayer.

A quiet mood came over him. The opening sentence of the cotton story came into his mind. And reaching for the pencil, as he was kneeling at the table, he scratched it down. Then the next sentence, and the next. Once the cork is out, the stuff flows freely.

And now it is finished, and counted, and cut, and copied. But would it "go"? The editor had said, "if it goes."

The next morning he stood at the curb and gave the news boy a nickel, his last nickel, as the story was told me, for a copy of the paper. But he was afraid to open it. What do you know about that? Some of us know a lot about it.

He opened the paper. Ah! There was the cotton story, *written on his knees!* His unseen Friend had been true. Mother was right after all. The knee habit had pulled him through.

He returned South in due course, became editor of one of the leading papers of the South, and made it famous. He had great influence, by tongue and pen, in sweetening up the relations between South and North, following the Civil War.

Then the tide of prosperity nearly swamped him, as the tug of adversity had in the early years. And again the knee habit re-asserted itself, and he became a great blessing to others.

If we might remember that our Lord Jesus knows all about cotton, and lumber, and oil, and ragged nerves, and tight corners, and notes due at the bank. And all he has is at our disposal, *through prayer.*

God answers prayer. Let us pray more, and more simply, and more expectantly.

Lord Jesus, teach us to pray. Help us learn how. Thou knowest both ends of prayer, the praying end down here, and the answering end up yonder. Teach us.

We would be good scholars in thy school, punctual in attendance, keeping the door shut, and the Book open, and the knee bent, and the will bent, too. We will be scholars; help us be good scholars. In Jesus' name, Amen.

II

THE "THANKS" KNOT ON THE END

How Can You?

THE knot on the end is the finishing touch. It is the climax. It gathers up all that has gone before. It holds together, and holds in place, all that has been done.

The thread makes pieces of cloth into a garment. The knot on the end holds the garment in place. It makes sure all the thread has done, and is doing. The knot is the thread at its peak. It's the thread at its best. The knot is the thread holding steady all it has done.

Now, the "Thanks" is the knot on the end of prayer. The common thread must be knotted. The prayer thread must be knotted. "Thanks" is the knot.

That word "Thank" comes of an old family. It is one of the fine old Low-Dutch families of Europe. Its lineage runs back through Old English, Old Saxon, Old Friesic, Icelandic, Swedish, Danish, and Gothic.

As you dig up the old family record, you find that "thank" has an unusually fine father. It is an own child of "think." The thinking has changed that "i" into an "a." And so thinking becomes thanking. Thinking things through has started the music in the major key.

Now, "thanks" is the true knot on the end of prayer. I mean a prayer that is fully prayed through. For "thanks" is the ringing note of

assurance. You thank a person for something you have actually gotten from him, or are quite sure of getting.

There's a ring in that word "thanks." It is the ring of victory, victory already achieved, or as good as achieved.

It means that you *think* things through, bit by bit, link after link, and the outcome is so assured that instinctively, involuntarily, you burst out into a song, a song of victory, of thanksgiving, for a thing settled. For thanksgiving and singing go together. When you are sure of the good outcome of some sore problem you involuntarily start singing.

So, ending your prayer up with a song of thanksgiving means that you have been thinking things through, all the things involved in what you are praying about.

Please note carefully that this does *not* mean that you force yourself to some phrase of thanks or praise when your heart is not in it, when the assurance is lacking. Of all things, not that. Though some earnest godly people do just that. But that is really not good sense.

But how *can* one give thanks, when the actual facts are all the other way? It is some very grave problem you are carrying, perhaps, involving human lives, and maybe human wills deadset the wrong way. How *can* you?

Well, there's an answer to that question. And it is an answer that really answers. It has already been spoken of. It is this: *Think;* think things *clear through.* Think through all the things that are involved.

Two Kinds of Prayer.

It helps here to remember that there are two kinds of prayer, quite distinct, each from the other. There is the prayer of *submission,* and there is the prayer of *assurance.* And the two are entirely distinct.

The prayer of submission means, when you are not clear as to just what God's will is, in the particular matter concerned.

Then you yield your will to his will, without being clear what his will, in this particular matter, is. And the immediate result for you is peace, peace within, while you are waiting for the outcome.

The great passage for this is in Paul's prison psalm.[1] Paul says in effect: Do not *worry* about the problem harrying your life so sorely. Pour out your heart's longings freely and fully.

And while the matter is still unsettled your heart can be at peace, and will be. The peace, that can't be explained by any mental process, will act as a garrison of armed soldiers, keeping worry out at the sword's point.

The prayer of assurance knows, actually knows, what God's will in this particular matter is. The outstanding passage for this is at the end of that great First Epistle of John.[2]

A simple paraphrase makes John's meaning a bit clearer. "This is the boldness, the absolute confidence, we have *toward him,* that as we ask anything according to his will, he takes account of our prayer as fitting into his own purpose.

[1] Philippians 4: 6–7. [2] I John 5: 14–15.

"And, when we know that, that he so accepts our prayer as working out his own plan or will in this particular matter, we *know* with positive assurance that we have the petitions we have asked of him."

John's whole supposition here is that we have actually found out what his will is in the thing concerned. John means that we have quietly waited on God, over his Word, thinking, brooding, meditating quietly, until his will is now quite clear, regarding the matter in hand.

It can be said that there are two phases of God's will for us. There is his will regarding our soul's salvation. And there is his will regarding the present every-day plans and affairs of our daily lives down here.

His will for our soul's salvation is quite clear. It is that every one shall be saved.[1] The man who is lost is lost against God's will, and must climb wilfully over the person of the Son of God to get into the lost world.

God's will for our lives, in all their plans, will be revealed to each one as we surrender to his mastery, and brood quietly over his Word.

His Holy Spirit will lead us to know unmistakably, in our inner spirit, what his will is, for each of us, in whole and in detail.[2]

Just now, take a single illustration of this. It will be regarding a matter that touches one's heart very intimately and tenderly. It is about the conversion of our loved ones.

[1] II Peter 3: 9. I Timothy 2: 4. Et al.
[2] Psalm 25: 9, "The yielded man he will guide in his mental processes,"—paraphrase.

Can we be absolutely sure of what his will is regarding this? The answer is *yes*, absolutely, unquestionably, sure. The bits of the Book quoted just now make that quite clear.

And so, when you are praying for the voluntary turning to the Saviour of some loved one of yours, now deadset the other way, you know you are praying for something that is God's will.

His own will in that matter is clear beyond any doubt. There will be more said about this in our talk about God's will in prayer.

Just now the thing to note carefully is that the prayer of positive assurance can be made, intelligently, for your loved one.

Get the Other Side.

But let us go back to that question asked a moment ago: How *can* you give thanks when everything points against you?

There's a further answer to that question. It is this: Think; think into *all* the facts in the matter. On one side are the facts against you, the difficulties that seem insurmountable. Think them through. Don't try to make them any fewer, or smaller, than they actually are. We're not apt to. And we shouldn't.

Now, think again. Think this time into things on *the other side*. There are at least three things to think about on the other side. And these three things can turn "think" into "thank."

First of all there's Jesus, *Jesus*, JESUS. Put him in on the scales on the other side. Count him in. Then weigh him in. He counts just one, so far as arithmetic is concerned.

He weighs—Ah! No scale known to us humans can figure out what he weighs. And this is a matter of weighing, not counting, tipping the scales down on the weightier side.

Jesus is very God of very God. He is very man of very man. He lived a sinless life. That, humanly, is the basis of what follows. He was Victor over the Evil One, in his life.

He died voluntarily for us men and for our sins. He died as no other man did, or could, or can. His death means just what he meant it to mean, for it was wholly voluntary. He was Victor over the Evil One in his death.

He left Joseph's new-hewn tomb empty, clear sheer empty, that Third Morning After. He had no use for tombs after that one had served his purpose. He was Victor over the Evil One, the prince of death, in scorning that grave after its purpose was served. It is a threefold victory.

He is sitting now at the Father's right hand, in the place of power, full, absolute power. The Holy Spirit in you, as you pray, is the Spirit of that victorious, all powerful, enthroned Jesus.

He sits on the edge of his seat, in his eagerness, bending over, to work out the thing his Holy Spirit is putting into your heart to pray for.[1]

That's item one, on the other side of your scale, as you *think* things through. Put Jesus in the scale, both for count and for weight.

This threefold Victor both counts and weighs. Aye, he clean outweighs all on the other side of the scales. Put him in, in your thinking, as big and weighty as he is. This is item one.

[1] John 14:13 (emphasis on the middle clause), 14.

Then, humbly, modestly, quietly, put yourself in. Yes, your own self; not because you're good or saintly or have faith, though we'll hope this is all true enough. But because you are saved by the blood of the Lord Jesus, *and* the *purpose* of your heart is to please him.

This is item two, some one down on the earth, the battlefield, in touch of heart with the Victor on the throne, yourself. If you are inclined, in humility of spirit, not to stress this, remember *Jesus does.*

He counts much on the one down on the earth in touch of heart with himself. It is through just such that he works out his plans down here. Reckon in item two, in your thinking, because Jesus does.

Then there's item three: that's your *prayer,* your actually claiming the victory of the Victor, in this personal life, or this problem, laid on your heart. The prayer is the actual working of the partnership, between the Victor on the throne and the man down on the battlefield.

And every prayer is a fresh touching of the spirit electric-button, that loosens out the power of the resistless spirit current, on the life, or spot concerned.

These are the three things that, as you think things through, you put into the scales on the other side, *Jesus,* the blood-saved man in touch of heart with Jesus, and the actual prayer.

The Thin Line of Light.

Do you remember that word our blessed Lord spoke to the inner circle that last week? They

were marvelling at the remarkable rapidity with which Jesus' power worked in a particular instance.

And our Lord quietly said to them, " Have faith in God."[1] Which is the emphatic word in that little four-worded sentence? Is it "faith"? or "God"?

Clearly not "faith," but "God"; not something in us, essential as that is; something outside of us, aye, some One above us, and in us—God. The faith is simply the link between him and us. The link is essential. It connects us with the power—God.

"Have faith in *God,*" our Lord says. Don't look in; look up. Don't think about yourself; think about him. Look up to our Lord Jesus. There he is, sitting in the place of absolute power, the Man who died for us, now in the Victor's seat, all absorbed with things down here.

Have you any doubt about him? His power? His love? This is faith—looking at him, thinking about him, overwhelmed with his love and power. Let Jesus in, as big as he actually is, as you think things through.

The look at him will change the vowel in the word. Instead of " think " it now becomes "thank." You still think. You never quit thinking. And your thinking leads to thanking.

But it's not a mere, perfunctory, polite, "thank you." It's a bubbling over, a Hallelujah Chorus of thanks. "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth."

[1] Mark 11:22.

May I ask you a direct personal question? Have you ever had a prayer answered? Once? Just once? For, you remember, one fact establishes a law of action, whether in the world of philosophy, or science, or here.

Well, let that one answer, that solitary item of experience, talk to you just now. Suppose you are sitting in a dark room, quite dark.

Let some one open a shutter or a door a crack, just the barest thinnest crack. Instantly a thin line of light penetrates the darkness, maybe making the darkness seem yet darker by contrast.

Instantly you know two things. There's a light in the room. You *experience* that. But that's the smaller of the two things you know. There's the other, the inferential thing. You know by inference that there's a whole sun of light just outside, flooding half the earth.

Here are two sorts of knowledge, the direct knowledge of experience which can never be contradicted. There's the indirect knowledge of inference, inference from the experience you've had.

And the great bulk of all practical knowledge is this indirect, inferential knowledge. The fact that the activities of our common every-day life are based almost wholly on inferential knowledge, reveals how intensely practical it is.

Let that thin line of light talk to you just now. That one specific answer to prayer which you recall, that's the thin line of light. It tells you of a whole sun of light flooding your outer world.

Aye, reverently, it tells of *the Son of Light,* the Light of the world, flooding things for you just the other side of the shutters of to-day.

One single simple answer to prayer, in your experience, is enough to strike the keynote of a symphony of thanks, because of what is just ahead, just the other side of the doorway of to-day, awaiting you.

David's Thanks Knot.

It is most striking to note what an exceptionally large place praise and thanks to God had in the old Hebrew life, and national worship.

The two outstanding men in organizing the Hebrew nation were Moses and David. Both of these organized the nation's service of worship. And both made thanksgiving and praise a large, indeed an overshadowing, part of the national ritual.

Moses was distinctively a man of prayer. He is one of the most versatile characters of any nation in history. He is still commonly recognized as the race's greatest lawgiver and jurist. He was an outstanding orator, a rarely gifted poet, the organizer of the most peculiarly remarkable nation history knows, and an incomparable strategist and general.

He himself declared constantly that everything he did, in these remarkably diversified activities, was the direct outcome of his personal touch with God, that is, his prayer life.

And, thanks to God, praise, loom surprisingly big in his planning of the national service of worship. The resistless conclusion is that this

grew out of his own personal habit. With him thanks played a large part in his praying, pretty clearly.

The remarkable series of yearly feasts, or festivals, had a large part in the unifying of the Hebrew nation, in making the remarkable spirit of national and racial consciousness, which persists among them to this day. And song, and praise in song, had a large place in these great national festivals.

Moses himself was quite likely a skilled musician, for he personally wrote the songs of the people, and instructed them in their choral work.

There is the outbursting song of praise, over the Red Sea deliverance, with his sister Miriam leading the women in the antiphonal singing.[1] There is the historical song of praise he taught the nation to sing at the close of his career.[2]

In addition to these, there's a most remarkable group of psalms from Moses' pen, which David included in his temple psalm book. For the old orthodox scholarly Hebrew rabbis taught that the group of psalms, Ninety to One Hundred inclusive, were from Moses' pen, as indicated by the inscription at the beginning of the group.

And it becomes of tensest interest to go through these eleven psalms afresh, and note that they are almost wholly praise, a jubilant joyous thanksgiving.

It was David, "the sweet psalmist of Israel,"

[1] Exodus 15: 1–21.
[2] Deuteronomy 31: 19, 22. 32: 1–45.

who, not only planned the Solomon temple, and gathered the materials for it, but studiously worked out the whole remarkable service of song and praise, that made the Hebrew temple ritual so notable.

And David's Psalm Book, added to doubtless by later inspired pens, was really a prayer book. The historical communions, that magnify prepared prayers with their graceful rare diction, have a classical model in David's prayer book. Indeed all Christendom, of every name and creed, have a common prayer book here.

For David's psalms are largely prayers. And a big part, if not the biggest part, is praise and thanksgiving. Run through afresh and see. David's Psalm Book is a prayer book, and his prayer book is mostly a praise book.

Notice three items here. Over one-third of all these psalms is devoted to praise. Then, there's a strain of thanks running throughout. And it makes one's heart beat a bit quicker, just now, to notice David's "Knot" of thanks on the end of so many of these prayer psalms.

Note especially those heart-stirring fugitive psalms, when David was hunted like a wild beast among those Judean hills and ravines and gullies. Most of them are the broken sobs of a man in deepest distress and anguish.

Yet the "Knot" of thanks persists at the end of them in a most striking way. And the outcome in his life's story fully justifies all his prophetic faith through those dark days, that seemed all nights.[1]

[1] Note for illustration, Psalms 3, 52, 54, 56, 57, 59.

Could there be found a more striking instance of *praise in advance* than that dramatic story of three nations, combining all their forces against the southern kingdom, in Jehoshaphat's reign?[1]

The king's prayer, in the midst of the assembled thousands, finds a quick answer through one of the national song leaders and musicians. As the three combined enemy armies massed for their supreme attack, the whole Israel nation, led by the singing clans, burst into a great chorus of praise and thanksgiving.

They sang praise at the beginning of the battle for the victory that was coming. But the battle was never fought. The enemy fell to fighting among themselves, until all were slain.

Paul's Thanks Knot.

The "Thanks" knot on the end has no more dramatic and intense illustration than the Philippian earthquake story. Paul's prison psalm,[2] fitted into Luke's recital in the Acts,[3] rounds the story out.

Two loud sounds fill the air in Philippians, the clanking of chains and the sound of music. But at the close the music first drowns out the clanking, and then makes it quit entirely.

There's a prison at each end of that little four-chaptered epistle. At the Philippi end Paul is in prison. He is in an inner lower dungeon, in the dark, and his feet fast in the locked stocks.

And I suppose the small inhabitants of the cell, too numerous for the census-takers, were

[1] II Chronicles 20: 1–30. [2] Philippians. [3] Acts 16: 19–34.

examining this newcomer, not to his personal comfort, to put it mildly. That's one end. The chains are clanking loud.

At the other end, Paul is in his own hired house in Rome. And that has a free good sound. But if he stretches one knee over the other to change his position a bit, there's a link of steel tugging at his ankle.

And as he reaches for the stylus, to put his autograph at the end, a bit of cold blue steel tugs at his wrist. For he is chained to a Roman soldier guard. Again the clanking of the chains grates on one's ears.

But, in gracious sharp contrast to that, have you noticed the keynote of the little letter? Is it patience? What an appropriate keynote that would seem.

Is it long-suffering? How fitting that would seem. Some of us know something about short-suffering, but not many of us know much about long-suffering, (though it always seems long enough, always too long).

But the keynote of Philippians is a jubilant chorus. It is some variation of joy, rejoice, rejoicing, "your joy (bubbling over) full."

The rugged little giant, in the cell, and in chains at Rome, he's singing. His cell is made into a symphony concert chamber, and that hired house, too. And it is anticipative music. Paul is dealing in futures, near futures. And the music turns futures into present-day realities.

His faithful physician friend gives a graphic, pathetic, touch to the prison scene. It's mid-

night. Paul can't sleep, for the pain of the flogging is still cutting its cruel way into his back, and into his nerves all over.

So he sings. He sings praises. His harp is not hung on the exiles' willows.[1] It is tuned in a major key. It's a joyous, jubilant, singing that lifts and lightens the night air of the dank dungeon. This is surely very striking.

And we actually know what he sang. It was the music of a name, the Name—Jesus. For the name, Jesus, is a music word. That is strictly its philological meaning.

Dig into the name a little. You needn't go far. The meaning is near the surface. "Jesus" is the shape in English of the old Hebrew word for victory.

The old word runs through a sliding scale, yeshuah, yesua, jesua, Jesus, that is salvation or victory. The Hebrew word for salvation is used in the English repeatedly in the material sense, because of victory in battle.

And victory itself is a picture word. It pictures a battle, with tense fighting, and now the battle won. The enemy is on the swift run of the defeated.

And victory always means the flag flying high in the breeze, and the bands playing, the air full of exultantly wild singing. This is what Paul is singing in that inner dark Philippian cell—Jesus! Victory!! Glory to Jesus!!!

But how could he? Is he screwing his courage to the sticking point, singing loudly to keep his

[1] Psalm 137: 2.

courage up? No, no, it's the outer ring of the song welling up within.

And again one says, how could he? At midnight, with a bleeding back, and nerves crying out, and the small insect population busy at their inspection work, everything imaginable to depress, how could he?

And the answer is so simple as to make one smile. And yet we miss it so much. The answer is found in Paul's own words, "While we look not (*not,* simply) at the things that are seen,"[1] at the One who, not having seen with these outer eyes, we still do see with the eyes of the spirit.

It's wholly a matter of perspective. Paul feels the ache in his nerves, and the stocks binding his feet, and all that, down to the last sharpened detail.

But he knows more. He sees more. He feels more. And that "more" changes the whole perspective. The "more" becomes most. He sees Jesus, *Jesus,* JESUS the Victor.

He looks up, through the dark of the dungeon, through the upper blue, and there he sees a throne, a seat of masterful control. He sees a Man on the throne, *the* Man, the God-man.

He sees that Man intently watching the conflict, keeping most careful watch of every bit of the spirit battle, being waged on the battlefield down here. This explains that midnight symphony concert of joyous praise in the darkness of that dungeon.

It explains something else, too, something

[1] II Corinthians 4:18.

more. Something happened. The music of Jesus' Name is bad for prison walls. The very earth shook indignantly, at the sufferings of the prison group. The masonry gave way. And, amid the débris of broken walls and scattered mortar, Paul had a Gospel service, with an eager audience.

And some one's else bonds, spirit bonds, were broken, and the joyous chorus had new recruits. The "Thanks" knot on the end had full sweep that time, and it brought startling results.

Our Lord's Thanks Knot.

Do you suppose that possibly Paul's spirit eyes, and his spirit ears, saw and heard something else, too, besides seeing that Man on the throne?

Did he see what the Chebar exile saw, the countless throngs up round about that throne, singing their praises of that enthroned Man, till the music was like a rushing whirlwind of sweetest harmony?[1]

Did he hear a bit of the same chorus that swept that other prisoner, the Patmos exile, till his whole being was thrilled and thralled?[2]

Then, when the redeemed ones join the chorus of praise, it becomes indescribable. It was like the unified voice of countless thousands. It was like the continual roar of the waves on rock-bound Patmos.[3]

It was like the mighty thunderings that broke so tumultuously overhead in that Ægean isle.

[1] Ezekiel 3: 12. [2] Revelation 5: 9–14. [3] Revelation 19:6.

It was all of these together, and more. For none can sing the praises of our Lord Jesus like the redeemed, the blood-washed redeemed.

Did Paul see and hear something of this in that Philippian dungeon? I think likely. Then he, too, joined the chorus. And the prison walls couldn't stand that exuberant reverberation. The strain was too much for the earth's crust. The "Thanks" knot on the end surely did great work that time.

One can never forget our Lord's use of this "Thanks" knot at Lazarus' tomb.[1] Everything, seen commonly, pulls heavily the other way, with a dead-weight pull.

A grave, a dead man in it, dead beyond any possibility of a mere swoon, a home that he loved all darkened, dear friends weeping bitter convulsive tears, psychologically everything pulled down with a dead, dead pull.

Yet, in the midst of all this, our Lord "lifted up his eyes, and said 'Father, I thank thee.'" And the grave yielded up its victim, the dead man walked out, sobs were turned into songs, and the tear-wet faces shined their new joy.

Surely we may follow our Lord's blessed example here. His use of the "Thanks" knot on the end is very significant.

Clearly he had been praying over the sore Bethany problem. And he had prayed definitely for the thing that actually took place.

Now, in the actual face of the impossible, he quietly confidently put the "Thanks" knot on the end of his prayer. Let us do it, too.

[1] John 11: 41–42.

I remember a mother, bitterly distressed over her wayward son. She was an earnest consistent saintly Christian woman. It well-nigh broke her heart that her son, her first-born, was wild and profligate in personal habits. Her fine thoughtful face showed plainly the grief of her heart.

Then I noticed a change come in her face, gradual, distinct, and then deepening unmistakably. And in conversation about the thing she carried so deep in her heart, I ventured to ask about the changed attitude of spirit, so clearly seen in her face and in her dominant mood.

There was a peace, in face and spirit, quite marked, and indeed blessedly infectious. Yet there had been no change in her son.

And, in effect, she replied that she felt just as keenly, into the very quivering quick of her being, her son's wayward conduct.

But she went on to say that she had committed him wholly to Jesus. And she knew Jesus could not fail her, and would not. Her prayer was assured of its full result. Her son would be changed, and utterly, radically changed.

And the result was even as she believed it would be, as I personally knew. The "Thanks" knot on the end knotted our blessed Lord up with her son, inextricably. And that brought the deep peace that itself tightened that "Thanks" knot.

A China Thanks Knot.

There's a significant story told of the early years of the China Inland Mission, under the

leadership of that rare saint and bold man of faith, Hudson Taylor.

There was a special gathering of workers and friends for prayer. It was felt that there was a crisis at hand. It was really a crisis of success. The work had been so blessed that it was felt they must push aggressively forward.

The workers had gathered for the special conference, from their fields of work. A day or longer had been spent in review and conference, and especially in prayer.

They were emboldened to pray that a large number of new workers, I think a hundred or so, should offer themselves for the service during the next year. And that they should be those of marked ability and training.

The tide of prayer and faith ran high. As the time came to its close the proposal was made that they appoint a meeting, a year hence, a meeting of praise and thanksgiving, for those who would come out in response to their prayer.

The boldness of faith in the proposal quite caught them all. It was felt that the Holy Spirit was guiding in this.

Then some one quietly said that it would involve much, of time and money, to gather in again from their various fields, a year hence.

Why not remain longer now, and spend the time in thanksgiving, for the hundred new workers that would come out the next year?

And the boldness of that took great hold of all hearts. And so it was done. And when finally they scattered to their fields it was with strongly expectant hearts.

And the thing thanked for came. Not one whit of it failed. The Spirit of God moved mightily among the university students of the old classical English centers.

And the next year actually saw that large number of the choicest, trained, university men of England gladly dedicating themselves to this service, and going out to China.

No one, on the inner circle of that never-to-be-forgotten conference, could doubt that the Holy Spirit himself moved them to tie that "Thanks" knot on the end of that prayer time.

Let us yield anew to his gracious movings. Then he will lead us to do some knotting, too. For that "Thanks" knot is irresistible. It knots Jesus to our prayer. The results are already settled, and in due course will be seen, and felt, and sung over.

Thou Man on the Throne, thou God-man, our eyes are unto thee.

Thou hast been down here in the thick of the battle. Thou knowest about the noise of the traffic confusing our ears, the dust of the road blurring our vision, and the thick fog of the air stifling our breathing. Thou dost understand.

Now, thou art on the throne, with "all power." But thy heart is down here. Thou art watching the fight down here, for us men, and our right of free choice. Thy Hand reaches down for every hand reaching up.

We will keep our eyes on thee. Help us. For thy wondrous Name's sake. Amen.

III

GOING DEEPER AND CLIMBING HIGHER; OR FIVE STEPS OF GROWTH IN PRAYER

Simple Yet a Fine Art.

PRAYER is the simplest thing imaginable. There is nothing simpler, nor easier to do, *if you want to.*

A child can pray, really pray, and fulfill all the conditions of real prayer. Yet, of course, the child never thinks of analyzing the conditions of the prayer made.

The ignorant drunken man may, penitently, kneel in the mission hall, and pray. And it is a real prayer, and will bring him forgiveness.

The busy man or woman, utterly absorbed in the daily job of providing food and roof and clothes for the home group, prays for the day's needs. And it is real prayer. It serves all the purpose of prayer, so far as it goes, in that crowded life.

Then there's more to be said. Praying is the very finest of fine arts. It will call into play all the strength of the strongest man.

It pulls hard upon the utmost reserves of experience and skill, of mental discipline and spirit culture, that long years have slowly, painfully, laboriously, built up.

And the man who has grown most adept in true praying, feels keenly that he has only touched the end of the fringe of the fabric of

prayer. His very experience and skill and gathered knowledge of praying, make him see how much lies ahead that he has not touched yet.

So, the child, and the busy man, are encouraged to pray, and to keep on praying expectantly and gladly. And the maturest man, with reserves of scholarship and mental discipline, comes to feel deeply that here is a field of activity, calling for the best and the most there is in him.

So I want to trace very simply the steps of growth in this fine art of praying. They are steps up, and steps down.

They begin on the common level of common life. Then they dig down, and farther down, to where the foundations are built, broad and sure, for a big enduring structure.

And they climb up, and yet higher up, to where the fine subtle spirit currents dominate all life, and actually encircle the earth.

There are five of these steps. They begin down where all gather, within easy reach of any one, *who will.*

And they climb up and up to the heights. They climb the heights of skill, of mature years and strength, of patience, and of actual achievements in changed lives and altered circumstances.

Prayer an Act.

Prayer is an *act.* This is the first, the earliest, the easiest, step. In some sore need suddenly coming, a man in desperation, perhaps, kneels and pours out a cry for help. He may simply

say, "Oh! God help me, help me." It is a real prayer. It is heard. It makes a difference.

It is very striking that every one will pray in an emergency. The man who never prays, will breathe out a prayer for help in some sore tug, that threatens his life perhaps, or his property, or some loved one.

It may be an almost inarticulate prayer, a wordless cry out of the inmost heart. He is utterly sincere in asking for help. And this is real prayer. It is heard. It makes a difference. It is most astonishing how need, intense, tugging at one's very vitals, will pull a man to his knees.

The blasphemous sailor will call on God if he thinks the ship is actually going down in the storm. The man shut up in a narrow blind alley, at his wit's end, sure that all is lost, yet reaches out blindly to the God he feels must be there, though he has ignored him so long.

Prayer is an *act*. You kneel reverently, and ask earnestly, for something you need. You pray the best you know how, thinking maybe you don't know how.

That is real prayer. It is heard. It makes a difference. It brings a result. It is good, only good. The impulse should be yielded to.

For there is vitality in that simple act of prayer. It will stir itself up to something more. One such act, yielded to, will bring an impulse, stronger this time, to a second act.

And that impulse, acted upon, will mean another and yet another. There comes to be a string of such acts, maybe more or less disjointed, and irregular.

Prayer a Habit.

And this is good, so far, for it can grow into prayer *as a habit.* A habit is an act repeated so often as to be done without stopping to decide to do it each time. The habit is the act repeated, and again repeated, and so repeated regularly.

And habit is one of the three commonest laws of all life, the other two being imitation and probability. Habit is the natural outgrowth of an act. What you do once you are most likely to do again, and to do more easily, and better, and with more zest.

Better not do a thing once if you don't want to do it a second time, and then habitually. For you're most likely to. All psychology backs this up vigorously.

Better do a thing once, and then again, if you would have it become a fixed habit. For that's just how a habit grows.

It is almost impossible to get rid of a habit once it gets fixed. If you cut off the "h" you then have "a bit" of it left. If you cut off both "h" and "a" you still have a "bit," cut off the "b" and all of "it" remains. Cut off the "i" and half of it, and the bigger half, is still there.

It's a blessed thing to form a good habit, and a thrice-blessed thing to get the habit of praying fixed, and fixed in firm and strong.

And yet one must quickly remember that, even if a bad habit gets a tight hold, that hold can be broken by a set will and the use of the knees. It isn't broken easily. It may be a tough fight. Yet, in Jesus' Name, the habit can be broken, *if you will.*

Men of power have always been men of habit, fixed, carefully cultivated, good habits. And men of power in prayer have been *habitual* in their prayer life.

If one were to call the roll here it must start back with Enoch, the man who insisted on walking the true road, even when it ran right across the traffic of the crowd, as his name means.

It would quickly take in Noah, who saved a race from self-extermination, and on through Abraham, the corner-stone of the Hebrew nation, and Moses the meek giant, and Hannah the woman who made Samuel, who in turn anointed great David, who poured out his throbbing heart in the psalms, and, and ——

But time would fail, and breath, too, to tell of those who have been the backbone, and the leaders, of every move for good among men.

Daniel's three times a day comes fresh to mind, and Paul writing his epistles on his knees. And one's heart fires kindle anew, and burn with a fresh tenderness and tensity, as one remembers our Lord Jesus' habits of prayer.

The early morning, and the late night, and a few times all night, found him quietly off alone on his knees. The lone mountain top, the corner of the carpenter shop, the chill dawn, the midnight hour, found him pouring out his heart in prayer. The wild exuberance of the bread-filled crowd, simply sent him off for a fresh yielding to the habit of prayer.

The prayer habit comes to be the pivot of one's life. It is not now a matter of doing, and praying for blessing on what has been done.

No, no, prayer becomes the starting point. Out of that habitual touch with our Lord, in the secret place, all the rest of one's activities goes and grows, and becomes fragrant, gently, dewily, fragrant with his presence.

That habit can overcome every difficulty, and make everything yield to its gentle persistent wholesome touch.

The simple story is told of Hudson Taylor's habit in this regard. The work of the China Inland Mission grew so on his hands that he found his day crowded to the limit.

It seemed impossible to get the time for quiet unhurried thoughtful prayer. Yet he well knew that prayer can no more be slighted than eating or breathing or sleeping can in one's bodily life.

So he was led to rise in the night, when the earlier sleep had refreshed him somewhat. Then when all was quiet, he could have a full quiet hour over the Book, and on his knees.

And he was able to get the habit fixed, so he could rise rather promptly, and go asleep again at the hour's close.

Without doubt here was the secret, on the human side, of that strong faith, that boldness in action, that gentle quietness of spirit, and that fine fragrance that marked his personality and presence.

The act of prayer can become a habit of prayer. It should. It must, if we are to know the beginnings of its real power. It would, if the Holy Spirit, the spirit of prayer, be allowed to have his way. It will, *if we will.*

A Mental Attitude.

But there's another rung to this ladder. There's a deeper foundation stone to be laid, for a higher climb. There's richer fruitage in this orchard. There's more water in this spring. There's sweeter symphony in this music. There are far greater results waiting our touch, *if we will.*

The habit of prayer can grow into *a mental attitude of prayer,* and it will, if things go along without hindrance.

That simply means that one gets into the mental habit of seeing everything from the prayer angle. The sudden difficulty that springs up in your face, the problem that looms unexpectedly up before you, the obstacle that all at once blocks your pathway,—whatever it be, you instinctively see it and meet it from this point of view.

The habit of prayer says, "I have set the Lord always before my face." So the instant the new difficulty, or need, or opposition, suddenly faces you, *you see it in relation to him, Jesus.*

That changes the proportion of things at once. The thing might be quite too much for you. But, *but,* now it is measured at once by the sense of his presence.

This is the meaning of the mental attitude of prayer. The habit of prayer, persisted in, grows the mental attitude of prayer.

The daily bit of time off alone, morning and night, with the door closed, and the Book open, and the knees bent, and the will bent, this starts, and it strengthens, the mental attitude. Now

you instinctively see everything from this point of view.

A letter recently came in the mail, that contained a sentence, that caught me at once, and held me. It was this, in effect: "I am not doing so much speaking in prayer. It has become more like breathing. The whole bent of my mind is to him, as these difficulties press in so close."

It recalls the remark made by another. It was this: "I used to pray three times a day. Now, I only pray once a day, and that is all day." The habit had become a state of mind, even while remaining a habit.

D. L. Moody, towering above the men of his generation and century like the great giant he was, was on an Atlantic Ocean liner in a terrible storm.

The passengers, utterly terror-stricken, in a desperate panic, had gathered in groups in the dining salon to pray. It was a strange sight to watch these people gathered in from the dance halls, the smoking rooms, the drinking bars, panic-stricken, faces gone white and guttered with fright, gathered to pray.

A passenger, hurrying along one of the decks, came across Moody standing gripping the deck rail, calmly looking out over the wild sea.

"You here!" he exclaimed in astonishment. "Why aren't you down below in the prayer meeting?" And the giant of faith and action very quietly said, "*I'm prayed up.*"

The desperate storm had no terrors for him. His mental attitude reflected his prayer habit. The prayer of spoken words had gone up. The

"Thanks" knot had been tied tightly on the end. The conviction had come in his inner spirit as to the outcome. He was quiet within in the thick of the wild storm. His attitude was a real factor in the spirit currents of the storm-swept sea.

The Knees and the Will.

I had an acquaintance in Belfast, up in Ulster, who was a simple-hearted godly man, with whom prayer had become to be a mental attitude.

He was a business man of large affairs, an expert in building matters. He was called in at one time, as an expert, to give his opinion about a certain building.

It was a new building, a mill building, full of machinery. And when the steam was turned on in the engine room, the whole building shook. It endangered the lives of the operatives, and was full of the most serious possible danger.

The utmost effort had been unable to locate the trouble. And as a last resort, they had called in this gentleman, as an expert, with a good-sized check, to find the trouble.

He went through the building, carefully, critically, but he couldn't find the weak spot, and he didn't find it. And he was really feeling embarrassed and confused. His reputation as an expert was at stake. And he wasn't earning his fee. He wanted to be honest, at least.

He stood with the executives showing him about, trying to conceal his feelings of embarrassment. "Then," in telling the story to an intimate circle, he said, "I said in my heart

'Jesus, you (he used the plural like that) you know where the trouble is; I don't. Would you tell me?' "

It was as simple and child-like a prayer as that. Instantly his thought went to the base of a pillar near which they were standing. It was the chief pillar reaching from foundation clear up to the roof. He had examined it before. It had seemed all right.

But now his thought went so insistently, quietly, softly, but insistently to that pillar that he got down on his knees to examine the base.

Now, I suppose that must have made a difference, that getting down on his knees. For there's a close connection between the joint of one's knees and the joint of the will. When the knee bends it's easier to bend the will. Maybe some of you have discovered that.

And it is quite clear, as a matter of mere psychology, that the hinge of the eyelid is in the joint of the will. Without doubt when the will bends to the higher will the mental processes are keener, for things are getting nearer normal.

Well, this man got down on his knees. At once he saw that the pillar was not plumb on its base. The stone mason came in with a hod of mortar, and the weakness was corrected.

The man's mental attitude reflected his habit of prayer. With no opportunity for the usual prayer, and yet in a very real emergency, his attitude of mind revealed itself in the quick involuntary inner prayer. And the answer came at once. And a decisive answer it proved to be, fully covering the need.

An English lady told personally of an incident in missionary circles in Algeria, near the city of Algiers. This friend was a voluntary missionary out there.

From another missionary she had learned the story. And this other knew personally the woman who had the experience. So the story comes just two removes from the woman directly concerned.

This woman was an Arab, brought up in the Mohammedan faith. She came under Christian influences. Slowly but surely the truth sifted in, until she accepted Christ as her personal Saviour, and openly confessed her faith.

At once her family was greatly disturbed. They coaxed and pleaded. They threatened and stormed. But she remained true, very quiet and very steady in her new faith.

Then the family did something characteristic of their people and their faith. They concocted a very subtle poison, deadly and quick in action. They mixed it in this woman's food.

As she ate she first noticed a peculiar flavour in the food, and then quickly sensed what had been done. Already she had eaten enough to ensure the deadly result planned. She realized, as quick as a flash, that the sentence of death was already written in her body.

She knew well how the poison would work. It would make one very irritable at first, then heavy and lethargic, and then would follow quickly unconsciousness, and then death.

It is impossible to describe the feeling of terror and desperation that came at once, as she

realized that her death, and a quick death, was actually a fixed thing.

She could not pray aloud. That would only add to the stormy opposition in the household. And she could not retire to privacy for prayer. That, too, was impossible.

But her mental attitude at once swung into action. It was an almost involuntary attitude of appeal to Jesus, and reckoning on him. Instantly, intensely, she began repeating one word over and over, under her breath, with increasing intensity,—"Jesus! Jesus! !"

All day long that went on, as she went about her day's usual tasks. And the members of the household watched her with staring eyes. What was this? The poison couldn't fail! Yet it was not working. It *was* failing.

All that day, all that night, that strange contest went on, and through a second day and night, and I think into the third day.

The woman, in telling the story afterwards to her missionary friend, said that she was conscious of that strange, very real, conflict going on in her body.

It was as if a wave of death surged in, and then as she repeated that name, Jesus, a wave of life rolled in. That was her way of telling the experience. And at the end of the second or third day the spirit fight was over. And she was wholly free of the influence of the poison.

The mental attitude of prayer means the whole being set in a wordless prayer. It is a tense prayer, tense beyond words. It is the gathering up of the habit into a fixed, concen-

trated, quietly intense, state of mind. And it is effective, quite beyond words. Prayer becomes a mental attitude.

The Life the Prayer.

Then there's a fourth step, up and down, up in effective achievement, down into the very roots of one's being. *Prayer becomes a life.*

The act, the habit, the mental attitude, persist until they tinge and colour and control, and then really make, the life what it is. And so prayer becomes a life. The two are inseparable.

One's life is the sum of all the choices, the decisions, the preferences, the characteristics, the mental slants, the personal angles, the habits, which mark one. They not only mark, they make one what he is. These make the character which one is growing, and by which one is known among his fellows.

These various steps merge into each other, sometimes quite imperceptibly. And yet each becomes distinct in itself. And each gathers up the force of what has gone before.

Prayer as a life becomes the concentrated impact of act and habit and mental attitude. And that for which we pray, and the evil power against which our prayer is directed, feel that accumulated impact. This prayer of a life influences men. It opens a way for God to do what he wants to do. It offsets the power of Satan.

A few simple bits out of real life will help here. Two men were seated in a parlour car on the train between Philadelphia and New York.

The older of the two was at the head of one of the largest manufacturing concerns in Philadelphia. He was an earnest Christian man, warm-hearted, with a fine human touch, active in all good things, and especially active in Christian movements. It was commonly said of him, at the time of his death, by persons of all classes, "Oh, everybody in Philadelphia loved Mr. ———."

The younger man of the two was his son. By and by the older man arose and went forward in the train. A man sitting nearly opposite arose, stepped over, and spoke to the son. He was well dressed, indeed rather overdressed; that type of man. He was apparently somewhat affected by what he had been drinking, though he had perfect self-control, and conducted himself as a refined gentleman.

He said quietly, "Wasn't that Mr. ——— sitting with you?" The younger man said, "Yes, it was." "Well," the other said very quietly, as though talking aloud to himself, "if there were more men like him there'd be fewer men like me."

And he returned to his seat, and sat quietly, with his chin on his chest, absorbed in his thoughts. He felt deeply, into the very vitals, the power of the other's life.

That life became a prayer, opening a way for God into this other's heart, shutting off at least for a time the Evil One's power, distinctly helping his fellow up toward better things.

Prayer becomes a life. The life itself becomes a prayer, one unceasing, throbbing, potent

prayer. The actual act, the daily habit, the involuntary mental attitude, are all gathered up in the life.

Some years ago, there lived a man in New York of outstanding characteristics, in many ways. He was a prosperous business man, a lay preacher of much power, and very active in humanitarian effort.

Among his many activities, he tried to help the large numbers of homeless unfortunate men, who are down and out. He provided warm quarters for them in the winter, and had hot food and coffee served, free, every night, down in the quarter they frequented.

In his gracious way, he spoke of these crowds as "The Travellers' Club," and called himself president of the club. It was a bit of his earnest kindly way of seeking to reach their hearts.

One night he had remained at this resort until past midnight, as his wont was, talking with the men, helping to serve them with food, as they came in with unsteady step and bleared eye.

He had put on his overcoat to leave, and put his hat down on a table for a moment, as he turned for some attention to one of the men.

And one of the men, in a mischievous malicious temper, poured the coffee-grounds remaining in his cup into this gentleman's silk hat.

Turning at that moment, taking in at one quick glance what had been done, he quietly emptied the coffee-grounds out, wiped his hat with his handkerchief, saying very quietly, in the cheeriest way:

"Oh, excuse me, boys, I forgot to have a bowl ready for the coffee-grounds. We'll do better next time." And putting on his hat, with a smile, and a warm "good-night," he went quietly out.

His carriage was waiting at the street door. And the coachman had barely started the horses, when a group of the men came running out.

They sprang to the horses' heads and stopped them, and seemed bent on some mischief. Putting his head out the carriage window, the gentleman called out, "Now, now, boys, don't go too far."

But the man who had poured the grounds into the hat was down on his knees, in the snow, begging his benefactor to forgive him.

It proved the turning point in his life. He was a college graduate, of marked native ability. He became a minister, and for years was graciously used in that holy calling.

The gentleman, so Christly in spirit under the insulting conduct, so gracious in word and act under such sore provocation, he was a prayer, a living prayer.

And the power of that active prayer was felt in heaven, and in the evil spirit world, and in this outcast's heart. Prayer becomes a life.

The Man the Prayer.

It's a scale ascending. The prayer has gone through the grammar of positive, comparative, superlative, and super-superlative. And still there's a degree higher up yet.

The man becomes the prayer. The act, the

habit, the attitude, the life, all gather up their force in the man himself. He is unconsciously the prayer, as he goes about his rounds, absorbed in the petty commonplaces of day-by-day duties.

And God, and Satan, and men, take account of this prayer, this walking breathing throbbing prayer. Its power is simply irresistible.

Do you remember Elijah on Carmel? He is prone on the ground, with his face between his knees, in intensest prayer.

It's the final moment of three years and a half of spirit conflict and prayer. There's a man watching the sea; Elijah's mental faculties are keenly alert.

But nothing is said of the prayer he made. Apparently it was a wordless prayer. His speech had poured out in prayer till, in sheer intensity, language gave out. *The man was the prayer.*

All the pleadings and groanings, all the boldness of faith, all the insistence of assurance, were gathered up in this giant of prayer, flat on his face in the dust. The man was the prayer.

And the answer was like the prayer. Mere words were inadequate to spell out that prayer, and are wholly inadequate to tell the results, in rain, and in the nation's after-years.

Sometimes the prayer of the heart is much too tense for words. You kneel, you pour out your prayer, the best you can. The "Thanks" knot is put on the end. The "Amen" is said.

But you don't rise. You seem held on your knees by the very intensity of your spirit. You, *you,* kneeling there, wordless, silent in mere

speech, *you* are the prayer. And an effective prayer that is, too, indescribably effective.

Do you recall that most remarkable bit Paul puts in, in writing to his as-yet-unknown-by-face friends at Rome?[1]

He is practically saying that we are sometimes unable to put into words the prayer in our heart. It is our "infirmity" that the tensity of the prayer cannot always be put into human speech.

Then comes the bit I speak of. "The Spirit himself maketh intercession with groanings which cannot be uttered; and he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, that he is making intercession for the saints, according to the will of God."

Notice: the Holy Spirt is within the man who is praying. The man in praying is unable to find word adequate to the longing of his heart.

There he is on his knees. The worded prayer has been spoken, spoken out to the limit. Then words give out. He is silent. But the intense longing in his heart holds him on his knees. The man himself becomes the prayer.

Aye, more, he is a prayer-*chamber*. That intense wordless longing in his heart, that is the Holy Spirit within him, praying this man's prayer in unutterable language. The praying is too tense for utterance in common human speech.

And the Father, and our Lord Jesus, sitting up there intently listening, recognize that the Spirit, praying in the man, is praying for the very things they have planned shall be done in, and through, this man's life.

[1] Romans 8:26–27.

The man on his knees is the prayer in this double sense, the man himself, and the Holy Spirit within him praying the man's prayer.

A very simple story is told of a little child quite ill, and very weak. The mother, coming into the bedroom, noticed that the child's hand was lying open, palm up, on the pillow, as though put there in that way purposely.

So she asked what it meant. And the child answered in effect, "Well, you know, mother, I am very sick. I can't think the words I want to pray. And so I put my open hand up there. Jesus will see it. And he knows what I want." The child's hand was the prayer.

I recall quite distinctly a convention of several hundred young men met for some four or five days.

A large sum of money, running into some thousands, had been subscribed for the coming year's activities. It had been a prolonged process to reach the total needed. Then a request had come that we raise an additional thousand, for some urgent work in Japan.

It was the Saturday night session. The task of asking for the additional thousand was allotted to me. I was feeling keenly the pull on my strength of the week's sessions.

As the address was being made presenting the need, I sat at the back of the platform, waiting my turn, too tired to think, too tired to put a prayer into words.

Then it came into my mind about this sick child's open hand. And I put my hand out, open, palm up. That was my prayer.

It was a rather long prayer, fully a half hour long, while the speaker made the plea. It did not seem as though there could be any more money gotten. But the prayer brought the result desired.

Let us *grow* in—prayer. Give the simple act of kneeling in prayer a place. Let it grow into a habit of our daily round, morning and night.

And the habit thoughtfully persisted in, and thought into, and thought through, will grow that simple quiet mental attitude of prayer toward everything coming up.

And as this gets fixed in, instinctively, involuntarily, the life will become one continuous prayer. Though we'll not be conscious of this. We'll not be thinking about it. We'll be absorbed with the day's practical pull and call.

And then the man may be—*a* prayer? *the* prayer. He may gather up the prayer in his personality. The sum of his acts and habits, the bent of his mind and spirit, these take on the colouring of his prayer.

Jesus, our Lord Jesus, thou Man of the Nazareth carpenter shop, and the midnight vigil, and the desert lone corner;

Aye, thou Man of the eager Greek inquirers, and of Lazarus' grave, and of the darkly-shadowed Gethsemane grove;

Aye, thou who ever livest to make intercession for us down here, teach us, too, to pray.

In thy Name, the one Name, the wondrous Name, Jesus' Name, we ask. Amen.

IV

SOMETHING ABOUT GOD'S WILL IN PRAYER

God Has a Plan for Things.

It is hard to be misunderstood. It is a bitter experience to be misunderstood by some one you love.

And if the misunderstanding become misrepresentation, untrue statements, even vile slanderous statements, the thing gets steadily worse.

And if, in your love, you have sacrificed, made personal sacrifices, and made them till the blood of your life was touched and given out and spilled, then the bitterness grows into a deep deep sadness, that cuts to the quivering quick, and clear into the marrow.

And if it be that the thing persists, in spite of all efforts to straighten it out, and in spite of the love still lavishly poured out, and the sacrifices for the other's sake are still being made, this seems the very last possible degree of acute suffering.

Such things have been. Such things are, actually are to-day. There are men and women who know precisely, with a bitter reality, just what this sort of thing means.

And yet there is no one who has known it so deeply, and so heart-breakingly, and for so long, as—God!

There's no one so much misunderstood, and

misrepresented, and slanderously vilified, and actually lied about, as—God. It is distressing that so much of the misunderstanding, and even misrepresentation, is by good people, people that seem so saintly. Yet there it is.

Yet, quite beyond one's ability to take it in, is the fact that the love has never been diminished a grot; the sacrifice has but deepened. The patience has been only the more, by the length of time, and the persistence of this strange misunderstanding and stubborn opposition.

Every one has a plan for the things he is responsible for, every one worthwhile. The good housewife plans the day's work, and the meals. The thoughtful mother thinks ahead about the child's school schedule. The father plans ahead for the boy's schooling, up to the college years. And so the bank and railroad executives, and so on, through the list. It's a bit of the image in which we have been created, this planning ahead.

It may seem a bit startling to some of us, even the thoughtful ones, to put it in this way, that God plans things ahead.

Of course, he does. This is the human way to think and talk about God. And it's a good way. It's the only way we humans have, the human way.

God plans things for us down here, the whole scheme of things, and, *and,* each one's life. There is one thing that acts as a check on his plans. And that is our consent.

Everything he does for us he does through

our consent, either direct or indirect. This, too, is a bit of the image. Man is absolutely free in his choice.

God is the sovereign of the earth and the universe. That does *not* mean that everything he wants is being done. And it certainly does *not* mean that everything happening down here is as he plans.

It does mean just this, only this, and all of this. That before the thing is done, his own wise loving plan for things here will be carried out, to the full, *and* carried out through man's consent, gladly and freely given.

God's Ideal for Us Men.

What is God's will? What plan has he made for us men? Well, there's a simple picture of it in the old Book. And it is a picture that takes hold of one's heart.

That picture is hung up at the very entrance of the gallery, where it may catch the eye at once, and fill the eye with its warm colouring.

It is the Eden picture. There man is made like God, so they can enjoy each other as real friends. He is made under-master of all creation. He is made a prince, to rule over a vast domain.

His home is a garden, a place of beauty and utility, with everything to supply needs, and to delight eye and mind and spirit.

He and God are fellows together. Don't forget the rare old meaning of that old English word "fellow." They spend the day together, talking, walking, working out the plans for the

earth as fellow workers, and have the time of relaxation in each other's company.

Is it not a winsome picture, taking hold of both brain and heart and ambition? Then the break came. It came through man, and through his power of free choice.

God's best gift was used in the worst way. The power of free choice, meant to lead man up into closer touch with God, was actually used to go down, down and away.

But God has never lost heart. He has never given up his plans for man and for the earth. His ideal for us men and for things down here fills his eye, and beats warm and quick in his heart.

This is what is meant by God's will. It takes in the whole scheme of things down here, and it takes in each one of us.

It *is* true, as the old-time New England teacher taught, that every man's life is planned by God. And the highest pitch any man's life can reach is to find, and fit into, that plan.

It will call for the best, and the most, there is in a man. And it will bring out the best, and make the actual best when the story is done to the end.

The Purpose of Prayer.

Now the whole purpose of prayer is to get that father-mother-lover will of God's for us, to get it done, and done to the full.

Prayer is not coaxing God. It is not winning him over to our side, by persistent pleading, until finally he consents to what we want.

It is not extracting favours from a reluctant God. Prayer is an intelligent, sympathetic, taking hold of God's willingness, eager willingness.

God's will includes everything that concerns us. It includes the body, its health and strength. It takes account of home and friendships, and the one great life-friendship that makes and rounds out one's life.

It thinks of the activities, the culture, the relaxations and enjoyments. It omits nothing that enters into a well-rounded, happy, human life.

And the whole purpose of prayer is to get that will of tender strong love, to get it done and fully done.

That means overcoming all the back-sets and obstacles, the temptations to wrong, and the hindrances, of which life, as it has become, is so full. It means carrying out all of that original plan for each one of us.

God's plan for things down here is plainly told out in his Word, this rare solitary old Book of God. It tells us in plainest talk the one standard of right.

It tells of his warm tender strong love for us men. It tells of the power at hand to help a man reach up to that standard in his own life.

It is most striking that there is no progressive revelation in this Book, neither of morals, nor of God's love. The flood-tide of both is in Eden.

The one unshaded, unvarying standard of right was written in Adam's heart in the Eden garden. Those ten Horeb Commands were given because that standard was being dragged in the slime of the gutter.

Those "thou-shalt-nots," together with the gruesome lustful practices so detailed and forbidden in Exodus and Leviticus, are a looking-glass, reflecting common moral conditions in Egypt, and all the world. The standard of right never varies from Eden's garden on to the garden-city at the other end.

And God's love, strong as a father's, tender as a mother's, eager as a lover's, faithful as a friend's, never varies from first page to last.

It is the *warmth* of love that plans a man in his own image, for sweet congenial companionship.

It is the *strength* of love that leads the guilty pair to the garden gate, that the garden might be kept pure and beautiful, fragrant and really homelike, for their return some day.

It is the *tenderness* of love, in that Sixth of Genesis, that is heartbroken over the way things have gone.

The language actually used there, put into simple English, means that the heart that actually broke on Calvary long after, was quite heartbroken with grief over man's moral plight.

The Book tells God's will for us originally, *and* as things now are down on this old planet.

It does more. It will make plain to a man now, God's will for us, in the particular plan for each life, and in the actual circumstances of our lives.

A Rare Combination.

There's a remarkable combination of things working together here, simple, delightfully

simple, and truly remarkable. Three things taken together make that combination, the Book, the Holy Spirit, and our eager friendly co-operation.

The Holy Spirit is very God of very God. He is the active one in all the plans worked out, as told in the pages of the Book. He actually carries out on the earth the plans agreed upon.

He is in this Book, inspiring writers, talking to us, looking out into our faces, touching our consciences and wills and hearts.

He is in us. I don't mean just now that he is in us creatively, keeping the life in our bodies. This is true, of course, regardless of our consent.

But I mean just now the deeper, fuller, richer, thing. He is in us, by our consent (if we've given our consent). He is in us to suggest, steady, strengthen and guide. He is in us to make us actually pure, and to strengthen us against temptation and wrong.

In a word, full of fullest meaning, he is *in* us to make effective all that Jesus did *for* us when he died, and is doing for us now through his intercession.

This is the real meaning of our surrender to Jesus Christ as Master and Lord. We accept Christ as a Saviour. But we should also surrender to him as actual Master of our lives, and in our lives.

That word "surrender" has been used much. And it is a good word. It is accurate. For we have been in practical warfare with him, putting and pitting our wills against his will.

This has been true, so much, of many who are

really trusting him as a Saviour. But they do not surrender to him as an actual Master.

When we do so let him in to dominate our plans and lives, surrender is the proper word. The act is just that. It is giving up our plans and preferences and accepting his for us. And then finding out how much better his plans practically are for our lives now.

But, maybe, another word would help to give another side of the meaning. "Take-my-yoke" does not simply mean surrender to his control; it means yoking up *with* him. The two of us go along together. It means friendly coöperation, working together for the same thing.

Articulate is the word used in school circles. The course of study in the lower grade "articulates" into the next higher grade, and so on, up and up. They are made to fit together. And they do.

Will you listen reverently? We, Jesus and you, and I, are made to fit together. And *we do*, when surrender becomes a habitual thing.

Now, these are the three things that, combined, will make quite clear to us what God's will for us is, in the circumstances of our lives.

We yield gladly and habitually to his mastery. We get time daily off with the Book, that so our eyes may be opened, our vision broadened, our judgment seasoned, our wills made supple, and our feet steadied.

And the Holy Spirit will make clear to us, through the Book, and in our inner mental process, just what his will for us is, in some particular matter.

And the whole purpose in prayer is to get his will done. Our narrower outlook gives way to his broader outreach. Our judgment comes to accept as its own, by preference, his judgment.

Our plans shape themselves, in the actual emergency of life, touching us very intimately perhaps, they shape themselves into what we come to see is the wiser, more strategic, farther-reaching plans, touching others' lives.

As we come to understand his plans, we accept them as our own. We do it gladly, eagerly. We're working together, now, he and we. Prayer becomes partnership, an agreed upon scheme of working together for a great common end.

Learning God's Will.

A woman came to me one evening, at the close of a meeting, and gently said, "May I tell you a bit of my experience?" I said, "Please do."

She was in middle life, with a thoughtful face. I listened intently, feeling I was looking into a laboratory of real experience.

Her story in substance was like this. Her home was on the edge of town, really in the country. Her husband was a commercial traveller, away from home much of the time.

So it was quite a common thing for her to be alone in the house with the children and the woman servant, with the nearest neighbour quite far away.

In the winter time there would likely be, at least, one tramp, maybe two or three, stealing a night's lodging in the barn back of the house.

And those tramps were a vicious worthless sort, who wouldn't hesitate to break in and rob, sometimes.

The danger of this had caused her much concern. She had prayed. She took every possible precaution. She tried to be trustful of God's protecting care. But a sense of anxiety and worry would haunt her at times. This was one matter of concern at the time she was speaking of.

Then she had been asked to take a class of boys in the Sunday school. But she felt she had no skill as a teacher, and in particular she was sure she could not teach boys.

But the superintendent had persisted, and finally she had promised to pray definitely about the matter before finally refusing. These were the two matters uppermost in her mind and heart at the time she told me of.

It was her habit to spend a bit of time in prayer and Bible reading after the first round of the day's duties had been attended to.

At this time her usual reading had brought her to Isaiah, chapter fifty-one. She was quietly reading, pausing to pray for this and that, then reading again and quietly thinking into the meaning, when she came down to verse sixteen.

And she said as her eyes, which had been turned away in thought, as her eyes fell again to the page the letters of the first part of that verse seemed as though in bigger blacker type.

These were the words that seemed to stand out so sharply on the page: "I have put my words in thy mouth."

Oh! that meant the boys. It was an answer to her prayer. She was to accept the class of boys. And quietly bowing, the decision was made. She felt she really couldn't teach a class of boys. But she would undertake it. It was the Master's plan for her.

And more than the specific answer to her prayer, was the realization that her prayer was being answered. Some One unseen was speaking to her through the Book. And for a while she sat quietly thinking about this, and about the boys, and praying about this new task.

Then, with her thought still intent on the boys, mechanically her eyes fell to the page again. And now the words of the next part of the verse stood out in the bolder type to her eyes.

And these were the words: "And have covered thee in the shadow of my hand." Ah! That meant the tramps, clearly. It was the assurance of protection in her winter loneliness.

And it seemed significant that the call to the bit of service came first. And then, as the call was responded to, there came the second answer, the assurance of protection. As she obeyed the bit of light that had come, more light came, and light of a very comforting kind.

Now, you turn to that Isaiah chapter she was reading. There's not a word about boys or tramps in it. It is speaking of some future time when Israel will be God's messenger nation to all the other nations, and under his protecting care in their mission.

But, the bit to mark, and to mark thought-

fully, is this: Are you listening? The Holy Spirit actually spoke to this woman as she was reading the Book.

He spoke *through* the words of the Book. With great simple skilful touch he made the very language fit into her double need, and answer her serious questions, and point out the way she was to go, and give assurance of the protection she needed.

In other words, fitting into this particular thing we are talking of just now, he told her of his will for her activities, and for her protection.

The Holy Spirit will lead us to know God's will for us, bit by bit, step by step, as we wait upon him over the Book. Then it is for us to do as he points out regardless of preferences or difficulties.

There is one matter in which we know the will of God without even asking him. And that is regarding the salvation of those for whom we are concerned. Here we are upon steady footing. There's a foundation of rock under our feet.

He is not willing that any one should perish.[1] He is eager that every one shall come penitently to Christ, and be saved through his precious blood.

Prayer Won Out.

There's a striking illustration of this within fairly recent years. It is the story of a certain prominent scholar and educator. He grew up in

[1] II Peter 3: 9 middle clause; I Timothy 2: 4; Ezekiel 18:23, 32; John 3:17.

a small college community, graduating in the college course while quite young.

He early developed facility in the study of languages, and also as a teacher. In time he became widely known as a linguist and teacher. Then he revealed rare skill as an educational organizer, and became president of one of the largest universities in this country.

As a child in growing youth he was trained in the old simple Christian faith. And early in life he accepted Christ as his Saviour, with a simple faith in the Bible, and in the substitutionary death of Christ for our sins.

Later, out in the thick of the activities of his scholarly work, he swung wide from the early moorings. The distinctive inspiration of the Bible, the distinctive singular personality of Christ, the distinctive sacrificial meaning of his death for us men, all these early moorings broke. And he drifted out on the sea of the vaguely-phrased scholasticism which marked the university he headed, in common with some others.

He was a man of great will power, very methodical, and of gigantic tasks and achievements. Indeed it was these very traits that, unduly developed, ran his strength to ebb while yet in his prime. And then the tide ran clean out.

He was on the sickbed which proved to be his last. There was time to think in the enforced idleness, and the quiet.

One day he called to his bedside certain associates in the university faculty, with whom he had been very closely associated for some years.

They were his intimate friends. They shared with him the vague philosophical beliefs which had swamped his early faith.

Very quietly he said to them, in effect, "I am a prodigal returning to my father's house." And he told them in a few words of his faith in the Bible, even as in his younger days, and in the atoning blood of the Saviour. Then he asked them to join hands, as a brief prayer went up from his dying lips.

When he died the word went out to the world that his last words were these, "I am sure this is not the end. There is something beyond."

They were words that could have been spoken by one of the ancient Greek scholars, groping in the foggy twilight, where no Christ light had ever shined.

But one in touch with the inner circle told me of the radical reversal, the return to the simple personal faith in a Saviour who had died for him.

If the whole story were told intimately, as it cannot be, it would be known that some one was praying. One in most intimate touch held on during those dark dreary years of Greek philosophizing, rarest culture, and nothing more.

Only that faithful prayer explains the striking face-about at the last. Prayer, that was a habit through the waiting years, and a mental attitude in the face of subtlest obstacles, and a life, and a personality in touch, that prayer won out. It won out decidedly and decisively.

Of course it did; it could. For there could be no question as to the Father's will for the sal-

vation of this man, as of every other *who will,* through Christ's precious blood.

Thou great Christ, Son of God, Son of man, God the Son, God a Man,

Thou didst pour out thy heart of love, that creative week, in making man's home for him, and then making man himself like thyself.

And when things went so bad, thou didst pour thy life clean out, out of a heart that broke in sore grief.

What a God thou art! What a tender strong will thy will for us is!

We yield to thee all anew, thou Christ. We choose thy will for us as our own.

We will take time off alone with thee, over thy Word. So we shall learn thy blessed will for us, and in each turn, and circumstance.

And all anew, with a fresh meaning, we shall pray, "Thy will be done."

For thy Name's sake, we ask. Amen.

V

HOW PRAYER ACTUALLY WORKS OUT, OR THE PROCESS IN PRAYER

Unexplained Things.

Prayer does things. It gets results. They are things that are needed. The results help. They help decidedly. They ease the tug of life. They cushion the jagged edges to our touch. They start a fresh rhythm in our hearts.

It would seem that in our day, peculiarly, there is a demand for results. And there is unstinted admiration for results. The crowd actually worships the man who actually gets results. They're inclined to forget how he got them. The results catch and hold them.

The machine that actually turns out the stuff, the crowd clamours for that. Its sales grow by leaps and bounds.

Now, prayer actually gets results. It loosens out a spirit current, and the results come at the other end. In the electric power-house you move a few hands over, a little bit.

And instantly a dark building is flooded with light, hundreds of wheels begin to revolve, scores of trolleys and trams start in motion, maybe, most likely, many miles away. You do not see it all, but you know it's happening.

So, you can turn the spirit current of prayer on, and as certainly get results, as tangible, and of far more significance and influence.

The grip of vicious habit, holding some man in relentless embrace, is loosed and broken. The money needed to meet some need, some emergency, comes to hand. The touch of health and strength comes to the bedridden man.

That blind alley proves to have an open gate at the other end after all. Circumstances shift and change. Hearts soften. Stubborn wills bend. Opposition ceases. Nothing can resist the power of that spirit current when used in accordance with the principle that controls it.

Yet you can't explain how the thing is done. I ate some whole-wheat porridge for breakfast this morning. Some of it turns into bone, some into hair, some into finger nails, some into hardened muscle, and some into soft padding of flesh. Now, how can that be, the same stuff turning off into such totally different substances?

I asked a physician friend that question one day. He stands high in the medical world, known internationally, with honorary professional relations in most European medical associations. He said, that when the thing was sifted down, it could not be explained.

But that failure to explain does not bother my practical habits at meal time. I still eat my meals, and depend on the strength they bring to do the day's work.

A broker in Wall Street sends a cablegram to London. That is the common way of saying it. What he actually does is this. He writes a dozen words or so on a yellow bit of paper.

The messenger boy takes it to the telegraph

office. The operator clicks a little machine on his table for a few minutes. Then he hangs the yellow bit of paper up on a hook. There it hangs. It does not leave his office.

Yet over in London a block of stock changes hands. Possibly a hundred thousand dollars change control. Now, how do you explain that? *Can* you explain it? The thoughtful answer is, "No, you cannot."

Does the electric fluid or current—*is* it a fluid? or what? does it pass *along* the little wire cable at the bottom of the Atlantic, or *through* the wire?

The experts, who know most about that sort of thing, frankly say they don't know. But we do know certain laws of that electric current, certain observed sequences of action.

And as we act in accord with these laws certain results can be depended on. As a matter of simple fact billions of dollars change hands that way every week. The huge business fabric of the world is run largely that way.

A ship in mid-Atlantic breaks a shaft, or screw, or some other part of its machinery. It sends out an "S. O. S." distress signal. Another ship, maybe several hundred miles away, alters its course and comes to give what help it can.

What really takes place is this: The wireless operator, in a little, square, cooped-up corner, on an upper deck, works his clicking machine. There's a confused play of blue light, sputtering and splashing. That is all. There is no wire connection between the two ships, no connection of any kind you can see.

Yet, the man at the little clicking machine on the rescuing ship gets a message from the sputtering clicks, and the ship's course is altered. Can you explain that?

But if you are on the disabled boat, worrying a bit, you have no doubt about it, when the other boat sends some reassuring word, and then heaves in sight over the horizon in the expected direction, and helps you out.

The Working Agreement.

Yet, you will notice one thing: There's a working agreement or understanding in each case. The telegraph man in New York has an understanding with the London man. The two ships at sea have an understanding about wireless codes.

A man's digestive apparatus has a good working understanding with the rest of his body. In each case everything hangs absolutely on that understanding or working agreement.

Now, the practical thing, for the busy man, in the thick of things, to mark keenly is this: Prayer does get results. It gets things done. It is as real, as practical, a force in life as these others. It brings results, as practical, as tangible, and as sure.

Here is the formula that gets results, whether with the porridge, or the S. O. S. signal, or the cable, or *prayer*. There must be the mutual understanding, the agreed upon arrangement. That is a fixed invariable law of action here.

Then there must be time spent in the actual communication in accord with that pre-arranged

agreement. Then the results come. Whether breakfast, or broker's transaction, or the distress signal, or prayer, certain known results occur.

But, *but*, get this straight, there must be the working agreement, and we must keep faith with that agreement, or the whole thing fails.

Now, the working agreement in prayer has four items, simple, fundamental, unchangeable, just as in the digestion of food, and in the use of the electric current.

The prayer must be in Jesus' Name. His name stands for himself; who he was. It stands for what he did when he died sacrificially on Calvary, and for that tremendous emptying of the grave the Third-Morning-After. This is the first item.

The prayer must be by a man in full touch of heart and will, of habit and life, with Jesus. This is the partnership basis. This is the second bit.

There needs to be time spent habitually with the old Book. This is the code book, the school book. It broadens the outlook, seasons the judgment, emboldens faith, trains heart and mind and tongue. This is the third bit.

And then there needs to be actual time spent in praying, as with food, and cable, and wireless call at sea. And, further, it is through the actual praying that there comes skill, the skill of simplicity, of sureness of touch, and of bold confidence.

Once given that working agreement, followed intelligently and faithfully, and there is no limit to what prayer can get done.

It goes through stone walls, past locked doors, into the inner chamber, and touches the heart of the man there, bends or unbends his will, and changes his decisions.

There are exceptions. There are always exceptions or qualifications to any general statement. But in this case the exceptions are extremely, *extremely,* rare.

When the conditions are complied with, there is only one thing that can make an exception. And that is a man's will, an obstinate, insanely obstinate, human will. And the evidence all goes to indicate that at the very last even this is very, very rare.

An Intelligence in Nature.

I said, a bit ago, that you couldn't explain how prayer works, any more than with these other things. Yet, *yet,* if you dig in a bit, just a little deeper, not far, you can explain much. It is possible after all to trace the process in prayer, partly, as in these other things.

There is an intelligence in nature, in your body. The food you eat flows along the canals within your body from the central stomach reservoir out clear to the farthest ends of fingers and toes, and so on.

And as it goes a bit of this is taken up and absorbed here, and a bit of that, there. The hunger of each part reaches out and takes what it is hungry for.

Bone substances are taken hold of to feed the hunger of the bones, and so on. There is an affinity of each sort for its own sort.

There is clearly an intelligence in the body. It is seen in the natural healing of a cut; the thickening blood stops the flow, the edges of the wound give out new tissue to mend up the cut.

Or, dig a little deeper yet. There is some One back of that intelligence, the Creator. His touch is never off anybody's body. Back of the process in digestion is intelligence, and back of the intelligence is—God.

Even so is it with the cablegram and the no-wire-connection S. O. S. signal of distress, and, *and,* the radio, that to-day puts men in touch by untold millions for speech of all sorts, and music.

There does seem to be an intelligence of a rare sort behind the current of something that runs along the wire, and the yet stranger currents encircling the earth.

It is a something that can carry faintest whispers and rarest music, and some things one would rather were not carried to us.

All that is needed is instruments in tune with each other, sending and receiving. The subtle currents are there, and always have been.

There surely seems to be an intelligence back of these uncanny currents. And the thoughtful man says, a Creator, the Creator, God.

When a man in New York can talk intelligently to some one in London, or indeed any of the European capitals, and be heard, and be answered by some one at the other end, surely it is not so difficult to understand about prayer.

That one may speak quietly at his bedside to our Lord Jesus, sitting just up there through the blue; that he sitting there, intently listen-

ing, can hear, and does hear, and does do something sorely needed; this seems rather the sort of thing one would expect, does it not?

For he has been down here. He has gotten tuned in to the spirit current of our lives by his generation of human experience, at least that much.

He understands things here. The one basis of all is that he and we shall really be in tune. He longs for just such communication. He has told us how to get in touch.

We simply accept him as Saviour. We trust his blood to clear up the old sin score. We cultivate his friendship. We enter into partnership agreement with him. This does explain much of the process of prayer.

Tracing the Process.

One Sabbath night, after service, I had gone into the ante-room off the pulpit, of an old Methodist church in Philadelphia, for my overcoat and hat.

An officer of the church, a man of fully mature years, was gathering up the evening offering. He spoke to me. The evening's Talk had stirred up memories of an experience he had.

He was an inventor by profession, specializing in a certain class of mechanical contrivances. He had been asked, by a large well-known corporation, to invent a needed mechanical improvement in a popular talking machine.

But the thing needed seemed to elude him. He had worked and studied, studied and experimented, but the needed touch was still lacking.

And it troubled him. He did not like to confess failure. And he didn't want to fail.

At his wife's gentle suggestion, he had kneeled at his work-bench in his laboratory, and made a simple bit of special prayer for this particular thing.

And as he was praying, very quietly it came into his mind what to do, some very simple thing it seemed, yet it had not occurred to him. At once he did the thing suggested. It worked. The invention was completed.

And this quiet-mannered, years-grayed, man, assured me, in gentle low-toned voice, that he knew that particular invention was a direct answer to his prayer. Prayer does bring things to pass, things needed, of a very mundane, material sort.

And the process here is easy to trace. The man's bended knee, and his will bended anew in earnest prayer, opened his mind to a fresh keenness. And the Holy Spirit could, and did, suggest to his mind just what to do. The process is simple.

One Sabbath morning I came out of the service, in a large Baptist church in a theatre on Union Square (now Pershing Square) in Los Angeles, Southern California.

A gentleman spoke to me. He was one of the officers of the church, a man a little past middle life. The morning Talk led him to tell me of a personal experience.

He owned a large orange ranch or plantation some little distance out. As in all that section they depended on irrigation. Some necessary

repairs had been made, and so the irrigation apparatus was out of use for a time.

Now, it was being put into action again. But there had been a hitch in readjusting the irrigation water-pipes. They had worked quite a while but seemed unable to overcome the obstacle. A certain pipe would not "catch" into the thread of the screw of the connecting pipe, down some distance under the surface.

They had worked over it until late Saturday night without avail. This man was active in the church life. He had duties there early on the Sabbath. He was reluctant to fail or be late. Yet the land was needing the water badly.

So, he quietly told me, he had prayed that the pipe might quickly fit into the screw, as he went out early on the Sabbath morning.

"And," he said to me, with a touch of awe in his face and voice, "it caught at once." What he had struggled over for long hours yielded at once to a touch.

He believed the prayer was the decisive factor. I believed him. I believe that it was. Prayer brings results in practical matters.

And the process here is quite plain. The Holy Spirit, the Creator Spirit, who pervades all creation, guided the hand turning the irrigation pipe, and fitted the screw into the thread of the connecting pipe. The man had asked help. And he gave it; help of the kind needed.

Jesus Does Intervene.

I shall never forget an experience one evening some years ago. It was down in a summer con-

ference, of the Southern Presbyterian Church, in the Carolina mountains.

It had been raining pretty heavily all the day. The gathering was in a sort of out-of-doors auditorium, with open sides, and nothing between the ceiling and the roof. The roof was the ceiling, so anything making a noise on the roof at once affected the hearing.

The rain had quit, and several hundred had gathered. But as the speaking began the rain began again, and got heavier, until by and by the noise on the roof was a steady hammering.

It was practically impossible to be heard, even though the voice were raised very much. It was quite a puzzling situation, to know what to do.

The only thing to do was to pray. But for what? For the rain to stop? That certainly is what we were needing just then.

But it seemed an unusual sort of thing to ask for. Maybe the surrounding farm lands needed rain. I didn't know.

So the speaking was stopped, and the suggestion coming to mind was made, that we bow in prayer, and ask for the rain to stop until the meeting was over.

An incredulous smile overspread the upturned faces, as we bowed. A simple bit of prayer was sent up. The "Amen" was said. It was still raining quite steadily.

Before my eyes could be opened, after the "Amen," a voice spoke in my inner ear. It was quite a distinct voice, and seemed to be on my left side; that is the impression of it that still remains.

Very quietly, very distinctly, and with a tone of finality, the voice said, "Suppose it don't." Those were the words, following a common colloquial form, even though grammatically inaccurate.

And at once I repeated answering words that seemed suggested to me, "It is not my prayer; it is not my faith; it is the blood of Jesus." It was all done with such swiftness.

Then I opened my eyes, and looked into a sea of upturned faces, with that same incredulous look deepening into something else, not helpful to see. It was still raining quite hard.

We sang a soft verse of a hymn, "While the rain is stopping." And as they sang I was busy trying mentally to pick up the broken thread of the talk.

Then I got so absorbed in the talk that I quite forgot to notice that the rain had wholly ceased. At the close of the service the audience scattered, enough time elapsed for them to reach their home shelter, and then the rain poured down again.

And the floods of water, rushing over a little dam in the centre of the grounds the next morning, were a striking reminder of how heavy the rain had been, before and after that interlude.

And, again, the process here is not difficult to trace. The Holy Spirit suggested the brief bit of silent prayer made after the audible prayer.

The mention of the blood of Jesus drove that evil spirit being, with his nagging insinuating doubt, drove him off in a panic.

The Holy Spirit honoured the blood of Jesus

by checking "The prince of the power of the air."[1] He held back the wind and rain, counteracting the Evil One's power, for that little time.

And so the purpose of the prayer was served. The process is not difficult to trace in the light of the teachings of the Book.

The Process Quite Clear.

It is very striking to find the process in prayer outlined for us in one particular sort of thing. I mean the process by which some one for whom we are praying, drops his opposition to the Saviour, and comes gladly trusting him.

It is that remarkable passage in Paul's second letter to Timothy.[2] I have ventured to make a free reading of it, in simple English, to bring the meaning closer home.

Paul is touching a very common, a very tender, matter in speaking of those who haven't accepted Christ as a personal Saviour, and who seem quite set in opposition to him.

It may be those who are tied up in the bundle of life with us, very tenderly and tightly, with the cords of friendship and of love. Our hearts are much drawn out in prayer that they may make the great decision.

Paul is talking of such as these in this truly remarkable passage. Listen to him: The Lord's servant (or ambassador seeking to win the other) must not argue, or discuss in an argumentative way, but be strongly gentle and patient toward all such.

[1] Ephesians 2: 2. [2] II Timothy 2: 24–26.

He should be quick and ready in explaining things in their true light, patient under misunderstandings and even under wrongs done. He should try modestly to make things clear, and clearer, to those who are really opposing their true selves, and their own interests.

In this way God can lead them to a change of mind about himself. And so these who have been taken captive by the Devil may return to their sober senses,

And so they may rescue themselves out of the snare of the Devil, and yield themselves to the gracious plan of God for their lives. This is a paraphrase of what Paul really says here.

Here the process in prayer is quite clear. And it appeals at once to one's good common sense. If we couple two other bits of the Book with this, we see the process fully rounded out.

That Peter passage,[1] already referred to, tells us what God's will for these is. Our Lord Jesus' words give us the general form in which our prayer may properly be put.[2]

He teaches us to pray, "Deliver us from the Evil One." That word "deliver," the word underneath, is a picture word. Its meaning is *rescue.*

A traveller in one of those narrow lonely Judæan valleys is suddenly waylaid by the highwaymen, infesting those parts. Some other travellers, coming suddenly on the scene, drive the highwaymen off, and set the man free of them. That is the pictured meaning.

Now, here, there's the human side and the

[1] II Peter 3: 9. [2] Matthew 6: 13.

divine, our part and God's part. We are really acting together as partners in this. We seek gently, tactfully, to make the simple truth clear, patiently bearing up under misunderstandings, wilful or real.

We pray: "Rescue them from the Evil One." In effect, in spirit, we step over on the battlefield of a life, holding up the blood-red banner of Jesus, the Victor.

The Evil One cannot hold against his Victor. He must leave, reluctantly, angrily, slowly, but surely. He *must* leave that battlefield.

Through our prayer the man is set free of the foul confusing influence of the Evil One. Through our bit of simple talk, and our warm gracious personal touch, he is also helped to return to his sober senses. He accepts Christ now as his personal Saviour.

By that simple decisive act he rescues himself from the Evil One, and puts himself in line with the true purpose of his being. The process of action is natural, and simple, and clear.

The Process Illustrated.

One night John B. Gough, the old-time temperance orator, found a lady waiting in the anteroom of the lecture platform, seeking a personal interview.

She was a mother. Her son, in his early twenties, had been reading hurtful books. He thought the Bible a tissue of old folklore, and the like.

He did not believe there is a God. Would Mr. Gough be so very kind as to talk with her son?

An appointment was fixed up. The two men met. Gough in his kindly human way started the young man to talking freely.

No, there was no God, the young fellow was clear; the Bible had some good things in, but was generally quite unreliable as a guide, and so on.

Gough listened quietly. Then in a pause he said, "Well, that's pretty serious, isn't it? Why not pray about a thing as serious as that?"

"Pray!" the young man exclaimed. Whom would he pray *to?* There was no God, he felt sure. And Gough didn't contradict. He didn't argue. With simple rare tact he fitted into the other's mental mood.

Very quietly he said, "Well, why not pray to Love?" He believed in love. He believed in his mother's love for himself. There certainly was love. Why not pray to Love?

And this was a master stroke. For love for his mother was the young man's tender spot. And this suggestion took hold of him. He promised that he would pray to love, Love personified.

That night he knelt at his bedside. With head bent, and hands clasped in the attitude of prayer, he knelt. For he was really honest in his skepticism.

Usually, you scratch a skeptic and you find a sinner, a common dirty open sinner, hiding behind the fine intellectual veneering of skepticism.

Usually, but not always, by any means. There are honest skeptics. It's a delight to talk with them, and whip things out honestly.

This young fellow was thoroughly honest and earnest. So he kneeled, and made the bit of prayer. "Oh! Love!" he said. That was his prayer. And he stopped. There was utter silence.

Then, noiseless as the dews of Hermon, clear as the vibrant tone of a bell, three words were spoken within his mind. They were words he knew from the time of his mother's milk. They were these: "*God* is love."

And an inner impulse came to him. And he obeyed it. He said aloud, "Oh! God." That was the second prayer. And again there was silence, deep silence in the room, and in his inner spirit.

And again an inner voice spoke. So softly, so distinctly, the words came within. They were words he knew as far back as he knew anything. They were these: "God so loved—that he gave—his only begotten son," and so on.

And again a distinct impulse came in his inner spirit. And again he obeyed the impulse. "Oh! Christ," he said. That was the third bit of prayer.

Then something happened. Outside everything was just as it had been, the room quiet, the pieces of furniture here and there, as before. He seemed oddly conscious of this.

But, *inside* there was a deep, an exquisite quiet. The common word is peace. But that inner deep calm was so much more than that word seems to express.

He was *in touch* of will and spirit *with* some One unseen, *Christ!* There were a score of ques-

tions unanswered. No one ever gets all his questions answered. As quickly as one is answered a half-dozen take its place.

But enough was answered, in that rarest spirit touch within his very being, enough to live his life, true and pure and honest. And so more light would break in.

Now, it is very significant that one can *trace the process* here. I mean that part of the process of which one may be conscious, more or less. Without doubt, through his mother's prayer there was a freeing of him from that evil spirit touch, of which we have talked.

Here is the other side, the human side, in part. Notice: He was earnest. He was honest. He wanted to find the light regardless of where it might lead his feet, and reverse his attitude. There was an actively willing spirit.

Then he knelt. That was a distinct step forward. Kneeling in itself means submission, submission to something, some One, however inarticulate. Kneeling implies adoration, reverence, a willingness to yield to something higher, if there be something or some One higher.

That kneeling would affect his will. It would free the joint of the will of any stiffness, any rust, and so make it easier to bend.

That "rescue" prayer is being effective. The young man's mental processes are being normalized, freed of that bad spirit influence.

There is now an openness of mind, of spirit, a willingness. Through that opening door a message comes. Aye, a Messenger speaks. He hears. He heeds.

That means that that opening door is opened wider. Another message, another widening of the opening, and yet more. Now the door is open. It is open from the inside, the only way that door of the will can open.

And now through that open door some One comes in. And his presence means that deep, quiet, rhythmic, unspeakable, peace.

The process can be traced. It runs along through normal human lines. It is fascinating as a study in psychology. It is heart-warming as a study in a man coming back home to normality, and to Christ, and so to his own true self.

And the young man rose from his knees, and ran to his mother, and he used the good old-fashioned language, "Mother, I've been *converted.*"

So he had been. "Converted," *i. e.,* turned altogether. "Been converted," *i. e.,* passive voice; some influence acting upon him had turned him. "Converted," *i. e.,* active voice; acting under that initial turning influence he had now actively, of his own accord, acted. He had turned. The process is a delight in study.

And he was so completely *turned,* by that Spirit touch, and by his own free action, that he started turning others, and devoted his life and powers to the turning of his fellows to Christ.

The *process* which can be traced in the working out of prayer, appeals to one's thinking powers. It satisfies the keenest, most exacting, brain. There's a sweet reasoning in it, that fully answers all intellectual requirements.

Then there is more, a great more. The *fact* of prayer bringing results warms your heart. The results themselves, some loved one normalized and ringing true, or something less than this, though not little, the results start the music a-ringing out in the joyous major key.

The process is blessed to trace. The fact is yet more blessed to know about.

Thou wondrous God, thou Jesus-God, thou Creator-Redeemer-God, this is thy world. Thou art in it.

Thou dost pervade it with thine own gracious presence, even as an atmosphere; aye, more, as a gracious fragrant personality.

Help us to come, simply, fully, normally, into touch, of will and reason and heart, with thee;

Help us to climb up where we belong, where thou art, and see things down here through thine eyes.

Help us to see thee clearly as thou dost come to us in thy Book. Help us to know thee as thou dost come to us, each, direct, by thy Spirit.

Deliver us from the blur of ignorance, the dank fog of selfishness, the black mists of preconceived ideas, the terrible pull-down of sin.

Blessed Jesus, we do come in touch, anew, now, with thee, that thou and we may be in full touch and tune.

Through thy most precious blood, for thy Name's sake. Amen.

VI

DAVID IN A FOG, AND HOW HE GOT OUT

The Experience Book.

EXPERIENCE is the best teacher, and charges the biggest fees. We really know only what we experience, what we go through, and what goes through us. The rest we only know *about*. And there's a world of difference.

The next best thing to having an outstanding experience, is to listen to some one else tell of the experience he has been through.

There is a peculiar fascination in hearing some one tell, rather fully, the difficult or dangerous or thrilling experience he has been through. We're caught by the story, as the story teller lives it all over again for our hearing.

Here is a big part of the peculiar attraction this old Book of God has. It is distinctively full of human experiences of all sorts.

Indeed this singular Book is like the Man, the singular God-Man. No draughtsman's pencil has ever yet drawn the line between the God part of Jesus and the human part.

And so with the Book. And the wealth of human experience in its pages tells much of the pull it has had, and has, upon the human imagination and heart.

Now, we want to turn to one of the intense human experiences pictured in the Book, in vivid rich colours.

It's a story of David, great, human David. It is a story of David's prayer life. And who could pour out his heart, all the emotions of it, in prayer, as David could, and did.

It's a story of this David, in a fog, in his prayer life. And that does indeed seem strange. Yet when we think of just one fog, in the life of a man whose prayers climb the mountain ranges, with their rare clear atmosphere and far view, that one becomes a background, throwing all the rest out in boldest relief, the relief of sharpest contrast.

Fogs are mean things. Whether the pea-soup fog of London, or its black fog, or the soft gray clinging fog of the Scottish moors and highlands, or of the Newfoundland Banks, with their mystery and uncertainty and possible danger hidden.

It is such a relief when they clear, or you ride out of them. What a comfort to breathe freely in the clear again where you can see ahead where you are going.

Everybody gets into a fog sometime. The thing to watch is that the fog doesn't get into you, blurring your vision, and choking your breathing, and maybe stinging your nostrils as they take in the befogged air.

Fogs in prayer, fogs in faith, fogs in friendship, fogs in the road of conduct, fogs in the upper spirit air! Ugh!

How disturbing and distressing when they do

blow in! What a relief when they go! How one does welcome the brisk bracing air from the mountains that blows them clear away.

This fog of David's was really a black fog. It seemed quite impossible to grope along. It quite took his breath, and sent him stumbling choking along in the dark. Then it lifted. It *lifted!*

The story is told in the Psalms. How grateful one must be for David's pen. How it warms one's heart that he used it so freely. He dipped it into his heart's blood, and wrote in colours of living hue, the varying experiences he went through.

And he did go through a lot of them. And they varied from blackest midnight of the sun's hiding, to the sweet fresh dawning of a new day, and the glory of the new flood-tide of blazing glory-light.

The shepherd lad out with his sheep, the fugitive hunted like a wild hare, the penitent sobbing his contrition out of an utterly broken spirit, the exile fleeing from his handsome wayward spoiled son, the king singing the nuptial wedding song, the prophet seeing clearly the glory of a coming King and day, what a picture gallery these psalms are of human emotion!

The Fog Psalm.

But now to the fog psalm, with the harp hung on the drooping willows, by the sobbing waters. And then, and then, that same harp drumming the most joyous strains. Its concerting har-

monies set all the air currents a-thrill with their wondrous symphonies.

It is the psalm marked off in our English Bible as the Seventy-seventh. It is most significant that the last bit of the psalm is put first. The end is at the beginning.

There's a look from the mountain peak before you clamber down into the fog-bewildering valley. The music begins with a joyous chorale before the minor dirges pull so on your heart, and take you into the depths.

There's fine diplomacy in this. David is saying in effect: the valley did go down, down low, but there was a mountain on the other side. I climbed up. I didn't stay down.

The dark gets so dark that you might be tempted not to go clear through with him to the bright shining.

So David says, "I'm taking you down where I slipped, but, hold steady, hold steady, the road leads up, up again, up to the heights." So we know when we start down that we'll be ending up *up*.

Look now at the conclusion this man has reached when he has gotten out of his fog experience in prayer. And the Revisions are more accurate here.

Listen:

> "I will cry unto God with my voice,
> Even unto God with my voice;
> And he will give ear unto me."

How much does that really mean? Note carefully that its meaning depends entirely on who

is saying it. If it is some easy-going, comfortably-circumstanced man, who knows nothing much of the stiff battle of life, and is perfunctorily reciting the creed of his church, at the Sabbath morning service, if so, it really is meaningless. It means nothing, nothing at all. It is proper words mechanically repeated. There is no breath of life in it.

But, *but,* if it is a man who had had full faith in God, of a real sort, as a fixed habit, and then he lost his faith, lost it completely;

There's a dead blank wall right across. And then he comes out into the open again, with faith in full fresh action, if so, ah! then the thing is different.

There's no perfunctory reciting of mere words now. The man is singing the words. He's singing them in a riotously joyous shout. The music is pitched in the major key, the stops of the grand organ are out, and the crescendo swell in full tone,—"I *will cry out aloud* unto God—and he *will* give ear unto me."

Then he goes back and tells about that black-fog experience. Over a third of this psalm is devoted to telling that disheartening story.

Listen: "In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord." Some trouble had come. And he had prayed.

Everybody does that. Emergency will pull anybody to his knees. Emergency praying is very common, in America. If there were more habitual praying there would be less emergency praying; less need; fewer emergencies.

"My hand was stretched out in the night, and

slacked not. . . . Thou holdest mine eyes watching (or waking)." It was night time. He had gone to bed. He was tired in body and spirit. But he couldn't fall asleep.

There he lies, turning and tossing in feverish unrest. He can't find the cool side of the pillow, nor the soft spot in the bed. "My soul *refused* to be comforted."

Bits of comforting truth came into his mind, suggested probably by the Holy Spirit, but he turned a deaf ear to them. He set himself even against the truth he knew.

"I remember God and am"—at rest? That's the way it should read. When things are as they should be remembering God brings fresh peace, a new touch of inner quiet.

No, he doesn't say that. Things have gotten into pretty bad shape with him. He says, "I remember God, and am *disquieted.*"

Pretty bad that. "I complain (evidently) and my spirit is overwhelmed." He is clean swamped. The fog is getting thick and black. It bothers his breathing seriously.

"I am so troubled that I cannot speak." Yet he seems to have rather remarkable freedom of utterance. It is striking how despondency loosens the tongue; depression runs clean away with thoughtful sensible talking things over.

And there he is, in bed; it's night time; the lights all out; it is dark everywhere in the room, and in his spirit.

He is turning restlessly, this way and that, and talking, criticizing, uncontrolled talking. The tongue runs loose. The safety valve is un-

screwed. Things look pretty bad, certainly pretty bad for faith. It seems to have no chance at all.

Then he takes to reviewing things. With the calmness of desperation, the yellow tinge of deep depression, he goes over the situation all afresh.

Listen to him. "I have considered the days of old." It wasn't always like this. "I call to remembrance my *song* in the night."

He used to sing when sleep didn't come. What fine psychology, in its physiological influence. "I commune with my own heart; and my spirit maketh diligent search."

And here is what he is saying in his heart communings, and his diligent inner search,—"Will the Lord *cast off* forever?"

He is casting me off, actually, throwing me off to one side. Will it be *forever?*

"Will he be favourable no more?" He used to favour me. But that's gone. Will it ever return? Never return?

"Is his mercy clean gone forever?" It's gone. It's clean gone. He's failed me. Is it a complete going? No bits left; and for always? No possible return?

Then he piles the words up, in a way common in the deep fog of depression. How the sentences do clamber over each other!

"Doth his *promise* fail?" Actually failing to keep his promised word to me. Is it "forever more"? Or, will God possibly relent?

"Has God forgotten——?" Ah! yes, he's a very busy God, looking after the whole universe of things. I've slipped out of his memory. So

many things crowding in; they have pushed me out.

"In anger"—"shut up—his tender mercies?" He's angry with me. He shut me out.

Notice keenly the underneath, unworded strain: *I* am all right; nothing wrong with *me*. It's *God;* it's God's *fault*. Criticizing God!

Did you ever know any one like that? Night time; in bed; all tired out in body; but sleep won't come; more tired out and fagged in spirit; and then take to criticizing God, and, by direct inference, pretty well content with one's self? Did you ever know anybody like that?

The Fog Lifts.

Then there's a pause, a break. The word "Selah" is put in. Just what that word means our Hebrew scholars are a bit puzzled over. It may mean this, or this, or maybe this other thing.

The thing they seem to come nearest to agreeing about is, that it is a music word. It is put in to guide the musicians. They think it may mean that there's a change in the music, a shift to another music key.

Certain it is that at this point the music changes. And it's a decided, a radical change. From a dripping sobbing dirge it makes a sharp turn, and becomes a wondrously joyous major, with the swells pressed, and the crescendo stops out all the way.

A bit of free translation, or paraphrase, is necessary here to make that next sentence say, in English, what David is really saying in his

mother tongue. This need is indicated by the marginal reading in the revision.

In very blunt English, in effect, David says "What a fool I am! How weak! This is a grievous infirmity on my part."

Ah! his whole point of view has swung clear to the other side of the compass. He *had* been quite satisfied that he was right. It was *God* who was wrong; not he.

Now, the needle of the compass suddenly, violently, swings clear to the opposite side. God is *right;* of course; God is always right. I, *I* have been wrong, clean clear wrong.

His eyes have changed direction; they had been turned *in;* now they are turned *up,* to God. And, *and,* now, so turned, he sees *in* clearly, accurately. Very striking that when he looks up and sees God, he begins to see within himself, as things really are.

The next sentence is really an exclamation. "That the right hand of the most High doth change!" How absurd! How utterly ridiculous! *God—change*! Unthinkable! This is what David is saying here.

His whole point of view is radically reversed from this on. Now, he is looking up at God. He is thinking about God.

God is the one unchanging, unchangeable, quantity in all life, if I may put it in such words, with utmost reverence.

Everything else changes. Everybody else changes. There is never any shadow cast by God's turning, so much as a thin hair, from his purpose, his love.

This tenth verse is the "Selah" of the psalm. The music changes. The doleful dirge changes abruptly to a Hallelujah Chorus. The contrast could not be sharper.

The fog has lifted. It has clean gone. The sun is shining clear. The bracing air of the mountains is in David's face, and spirit.

This tenth verse is the hinge of a door. The door swings open on the hinge. It's a door out to a large place. It leads into a symphony concert chamber. Let us follow David in, and listen to the music.

And the music is made by *memory*. The music score is written on the pages of the past. There is a calling up to mind of what God had done, and what he has been.

For the great swelling undertone throughout is this: *God doesn't change*. His love, his power, are unchanged and unchangeable. His heart still beats as tenderly as it ever did. His power is as resistless, in its onsweep against opposition, as it ever has been. This fills the remaining stanzas of the psalm.

Listen a bit: "I will make mention of the deeds of the Lord; for I will remember thy wonders of old." For, what he has done, he still does, and he will do. He doesn't change.

Chewing the Cud.

"I will meditate also upon all thou hast done, and muse upon thy doings." Those two words "meditate" and "muse" are really interchangeable words, with the same practical meaning.

There's another word which is very close akin.

That is the word ruminate, which means to chew the cud. In effect, though not literally, this is the sort of word used here.

Chew the cud! What an expressive picturesque word. The cow is called a ruminant because she chews the cud. She will lie quietly for hours, in the field, tirelessly chewing the cud of the food she has been eating.

So all the rich nutriment in the food is extracted and is absorbed. And so we get rich milk and cream and butter and other milk products, and fine meat foods, through that chewing of the cud.

David says here, in effect, I will spend hours chewing the cud of thy wondrous doings. So his very being was fed, with the rarest nourishment of spirit and of faith, through that mental cud-chewing.

There might well be more human ruminants, chewing the cud of God's Word, and of what he has done.

And as he so chewed the cud of what God has done for his people, David breaks out in an involuntary burst of praise.

Listen: "Thy way, oh God, is in the sanctuary." Again, a bit of freer translation makes clearer just what he means. "Thy way, oh God, is in holiness," or better yet, "Thy way is a whole, a fully-rounded-out, a perfect, way." There are no flaws nor slips in it.

And as that grows upon him, in his quiet deep meditation, he burst out again, "Who *is* a great god like unto *God?*"

And then David takes a big climb up the

ladder of faith, an exultant faith. He says, "Thou art the God that *doest* wonders."

He goes from "wonders of old" to "doest wonders." What a swing forward! How far is it between those two phrases? Farther than some of us ever get.

There's all the distance between some one else's experience in the past, and our own experience to-day. There are a lot of people whose tents are pitched back in verse eleven, "wonders of old."

And they are choice saintly people, too. They feed upon the record in this blessed old Book, of what God has done for his people. And a blessed diet it is, too, with rich nourishment for the life.

But there's yet better nourishment, *if* we will take it. Trust God to-day, as he clearly leads. Step out when and where he clearly beckons, even though you can't see the way through and out.

Move out of verse eleven up into verse fourteen. Change the grammar of your faith into the present tense, "*doest* wonders."

"Thy wonders of old;" that's back a long way. It's over in the near Orient, the Red Sea deliverance, water from the flinty rock, the Jordan turning back for dry-shod going into the land of promise.

That's a blessed place to pitch your tent, and pause quietly, and chew the cud, till the blood of your faith is fed and enriched.

"A God that *doest* wonders." Ah! that's to-day. Some of us might readjust our calen-

dars. Keep the calendar of the past hanging out on the wall in plain sight.

Then hang up a new calendar, the calendar of the present, of trusting God's clear leading today, even though we can't see how things will come out.

Use the past to stir the present. Let the present be fresh proof of the past. He is the same God whether then or now, whether Egypt or the Levant, or the street and town where you live.

The thing to be clear about is the Holy Spirit's clear gracious leading. There's to be no jumping off the pinnacle of the temple at some sudden impulse or suggestion.

There is no one so sane as one led and swayed by the Holy Spirit. He is such a sane sensible Holy Spirit. Be clear of his leading.

But, one can live in the present. Faith can be as fresh as the dew of the new morning after a still clear night. Let the past prod the present.

This is just what David does here. He stirs up his newly-recovered faith by recalling what God did do long before.

Listen again: "Thou hast with thine arm redeemed thy people." He's back in Egypt now, back at the Red Sea, back at the Holy Mount, back to the Jordan crossing.

For the greatest event in Israel's history was the deliverance that began at the Red Sea and came up to its full climax in the Canaan victories.

The high-water mark of God's power in the Old Testament is the Red Sea deliverance. The

high-water mark of God's power in the New Testament is the resurrection of Jesus. The two are akin. They are both resurrections, a coming up out of death into life.

Any one of us may expect to experience power up to this high-water mark, at least, *as the need may be,* and as the Holy Spirit *may* see wise to lead us.

Sleep as a Confession of Faith.

And the remainder of the psalm is taken up in a vivid description of the great deliverance out of Egypt, through the Wilderness, and then on into the new home-land of Canaan and victory.[1]

And this is the last word, a tender personal word:

"Thou leddest thy people like (a shepherd leads) a flock,
By the hand of Moses and Aaron."

The oriental shepherd shares his life with the sheep. He eats with them, sleeps with them, carefully anoints their wounds with healing oil, fights their enemies, risks his life for them if need be.

That's what God is like, this old-time shepherd psalm-writer says. And he said it out of his experience with sheep, and with God. He says it out of his inmost heart.

And now David ties the knot on the end to hold the seam in place. He puts the last word

[1] Verses 15 to end of psalm, with Exodus 14:21 and on; and Judges 5:4–5, and Psalm 18:13–15.

in. It is the word he so carefully put in at the first.

So now the end, put in at the beginning, slips into its place, at the close of the story. Out of the fog of the low-lying swamps of doubt, and dank darkness, rings out the clear closing note: "I *will cry* unto God with my voice.

"Even unto *God* (and no other one) with my (living) voice (ringing out clear and sure); and he *will* give (an attentive eager) ear unto me."

And now, that man lying there in the dark, a bit ago, tossing restlessly, he's found the soft spot in the bed; he's found the cool side of the pillow. He's off in a quiet, deep, refreshing sleep.

Sometimes sleep is a confession of faith. Some people ought to wake up. They are quite too skilled in sleeping, on their feet, with their eyes open.

But some people ought to sleep, and sleep more, and sleep quietly. Sleep may be a very real expression of confidence in God, regarding the outcome of some personal ticklish situation.

When this same David was fleeing for his life, in his old age, from Absalom his son, that first night out, he slept.

Listen to him telling about it afterwards: "I laid me down and slept; I awaked (refreshed); for the Lord sustain*eth* me."[1]

So here, you listen to David's quiet deep breathing in sleep. The very rhythm of the breathing in sleep tells out the story of the rest of faith.

[1] Psalm 3:5.

So the fog lifted. The air cleared. David's out of the swamps now, with their mean foggy poisonous vapours. He's up on the mountain tops, with the bracing air, and the far view, with the peace in his heart, and a song on his lips. Let us join him up there, and help swell the chorus.

"Lest We Forget."

And it was *memory* that took him by the hand, and led him gently up the hill, out of the foggy lowlands, up the heights. He remembered past difficulties *and* deliverances. But memory is treacherous sometimes, with some of us. We forget, easily, sometimes.

Does this explain that refrain, running through those Deuteronomy talks of Moses in the Plains of Moab, "Lest thou forget;" "lest thou forget."

What music that refrain makes in the Jubilee Recessional Hymn of England's non-titular poet laureate, "lest we forget."

And there is a rare touch of humanness in that word of David's "and *forget not* all his benefits."[1] We can't remember them all. But we are told here to be careful not to forget them all. That leads straight down into the fogs, and the murky swamps.

Before the World War, Waterloo has stood out in our thinking as one of the greatest of the many great battlefields.

No bit of the earth's surface had been more

[1] Psalm 103:2.

plowed up by shot and shell, nor more soaked and drenched and consecrated by precious human blood.

And, likewise, no bit of the earth sees such a great profusion of sweet forget-me-nots every springtime. They delight the eye with their rare beauty of blue.

This is the friendship flower of the western hemisphere. In almost every language of Europe it bears a name, the same in meaning as our own English forget-me-not. It is peculiarly memory's flower.

It is as though the countless hosts of brave men who there, at Waterloo, gave up their lives for liberty, are speaking: "Forget-me-not" they say, "Remember me." The very earth's soil sends out their plea, every new springtime, for remembrance.

It is with a hush of tender awe that one remembers that we Christ people have a memory plea, an outstanding, hallowed, hallowing, plea. It, too, comes to us in the plea of blood, blood shed, freely, voluntarily.

Out from that last night, that first observance of a memory meal, come the words: "This do in remembrance of me."

Out from Calvary it comes, and from Joseph's Tomb, and from the Ascension Cloud, and, too, out from that Throne. Above the storm, in the crystal clear, rings out the word: Remember; "do this in remembrance—of me—till I come."

Memory takes us back to Calvary, and up to the Throne, and points forward to the coming day of victory *on the earth.*

Let memory plant flowers in the garden of our hearts to-day. Their sweet true blue will hold us steady, till the day dawn, and the shadows flee away.

I love to tell the incident that occurred, late one afternoon, years ago, on the Scotch ridge running out of Pittsburgh into Ohio.

A lady came up at the close of a service, and abruptly asked, "Does God answer prayer?" And the expression of pain in her mature thoughtful face told from what depths the question came up.

I didn't say "Yes." That seemed quite too tame with those pain-haunted eyes looking into mine. I simply said, "Sit down a moment. Has he ever answered a prayer for you, *once?*"

And a quick startled look came into her eyes. And in a softened voice, half to herself, she said, "Oh! I forgot." Then, under my questioning, she told the story that memory brought up.

Years before her daughter, then a young child, had been seriously ill. The physician had said it would be necessary to use the knife. Her mother instinct recoiled. The surgical knife was not used so freely then as since.

She asked if she might have time to think about such a serious matter. And the physician assured her that a brief delay would not be serious.

That night late she had knelt at her bedside, and made special prayer for her daughter. She did not pray for healing. She had not been taught about that. It did not come into her thought. It was simply an intense cry for help.

The morning came. The physician made his examination. A startled look came into his thoughtful face, as he said quietly:

"This is strange. I don't understand. There's a distinct change in your daughter's condition. I can't quite make out how it can be. But I'll not need to use the knife. She will get well without it." And she did.

And the sweet gentle stirrings of memory brought the answer to that tense question, out of her own intimate experience. Let us say with David, "*I* will remember." It will clear many a fog.

That rare man of God, George Mueller, whose Bristol orphanages put faith into enduring brick and mortar, tells of a simple experience he had one time with a fog.

He was approaching Canada, by the St. Lawrence route. The fogs, so frequent on the Newfoundland banks and thereabouts, slowed up the ship's speed. There was danger of getting in too late for a certain speaking appointment Mr. Mueller had, I think, in Montreal.

In his concern, Mr. Mueller spoke to the captain of the ship about his appointment, and the need of the ship's getting in on time.

The captain doubted if it were possible to make port on schedule. In his quiet way Mr. Mueller said he had been praying for the fog to lift, so his appointment might be kept.

The captain was quite incredulous about such a use of prayer. He exclaimed, "Do you know what a dense fog this is?"

And Mr. Mueller quietly said, in his gentle

measured tones, "Do you know what a great God we have?" And the fog did lift. And the boat docked on time, and the appointment was kept.

Prayer can clear fogs, both kinds. And simple faith in God prompts simple clear Spirit-suggested prayer. And memory stimulates faith. Let us "forget not"—our wondrous God.

Watch the Man in Command.

May I tell a very quaint, homely story? It is a story out of real life, so it has a tang to it, the tang of reality.

A friend was waiting at the curb at New York City's busiest traffic corner, or one of them, Broadway and Forty-second Street. That is one of the most congested corners to be found anywhere.

The exception would be the Bank corner, in the City, in London, which probably knows the thickest congestion to be found in any city in the world.

As the friend waited for the crossing to be cleared by the traffic officer, a cat came to the curb. It was a mother cat holding her baby kitten in her mouth, by the scuff of the neck, cat style.

The cat evidently wanted to cross the street. But the crossing was crowded thick with the traffic, taxis, trucks, trolleys, and other vehicles.

The cat made a start and then drew back. It was too dangerous. A second start was made, and again the retreat to the curb, and a third attempt and retreat.

Then the traffic officer saw the cat. How do you suppose his eye lighted on that cat in that confused maze? Well, he did see the cat. He was probably an Irishman, with a heart as warm as his body was big.

At once he put up his hand for the traffic to clear. And the traffic officer's hands are not a request, not exactly. Any one who drives an automobile knows that. All the authority of the city government is back of the uplifted hand of the traffic officer.

He lifted up his hands, and signalled for the traffic to clear, at the intersection of the streets, *both ways*. He didn't know which way that cat wanted to go.

The cat watched alertly. What was this? Some new danger? The crossing suddenly so cleared? Looking quickly this way and that, the cat darted across, and gained the other curb in safety with her baby. Then the officer's hands signalled again, and traffic was resumed. And the cat never knew how it happened.

The moral traffic is pretty badly congested these days. It's difficult going. And the moral fogs have made the streets and roads very slippery. Skidding is very common, moral skidding, by those a-wheel, and slipping by those a-foot. Many a man cautiously waits at the curb, studying the chances for getting across in safety.

With the utmost reverence, may I say, there's a Traffic Officer, in the thick of it all, keeping careful watch. His hands go up many a time on behalf of some threatened, troubled pedestrian.

And they are pierced hands. They are hands of power, resistless power. And they are obeyed, absolutely, in the unseen spirit world, even by those who hate him. They must be obeyed. They are.

Many a time the crossing, in the thick of thickest traffic, has suddenly, quietly, cleared. Those pierced hands were in action in the spirit atmosphere. And we have gotten safely through, and gone on our way, breathing more freely, singing a bit.

Have we sometimes been like the cat, quite unconscious of the Traffic Officer?

Jesus, Lord Jesus, thou hast been down here. Thou knowest about the fogs, the blinding bewildering fogs, the Nazareth fogs, the Wilderness fogs, the Gethsemane fog; Aye, the terrific Calvary fog, and the close-hugging Joseph's-tomb black fog.

But thou dost know, too, the bracing mountain air; the bracing air of the Transfiguration Mount, and the Father's reassuring voice, and the Third Morning After, yes, and the Ascension glory-cloud, and the Throne up above the storm in the crystal clear.

Help us keep our eye on thee, as we stand down here, on the curb, in the thick of traffic, in the blinding blurring fog, till we see thee face to face, yonder, or—here, with all clear.

In thy Name, the one Name, Jesus' Name, we pray. Amen.

VII

ELIJAH ON CARMEL

(I Kings 18: 41–46)

A Crisis Man.

Every crisis produces its own master. Every sore problem contains its own solution. There's the answer inside every serious question. A thread hangs out of the tantalizing puzzle, the unravelling thread.

And, *and*, this unexpected thing can be said. Out of the thick and tug of bloodtouch with the ugliest problem, the stubborn question, the brain-bewildering puzzle, the desperate moral crisis, this can be said. It can be said in measured thoughtful tones,—love is the touchstone.

It must be the real thing of love, the love that "never faileth." And that is rare. It is rare in its scarcity, and rare in its resistless power.

Love *can* solve the problem, and undo the tangle, and answer the question, and master the crisis. It can. It only can. Any other solution lays, or leaves, eggs for a future foul hatching.

The puzzle gets yet more intricately tangled and tangling. The question turns up again to haunt you, asleep and awake. The crisis looks you in the face at some sudden corner with an insolent stare.

This man Elijah is a striking illustration of just this. Of all the leaders in action of the

Hebrew story he stands out, with Moses, as one of the tallest. He is a mountain peak towering above the whole range.

For abruptness of appearance on the scene, intensity of action, ruggedness of character, imperious boldness, he stands out alone, and stands at the head.

Yet his humanness stands out sharply, too. There is the intense mood of depression, due so largely to bodily and mental fatigue.

There is the shrewd caution that wisely gets away from the likelihood of a knife, thrust into his vitals, in the back, and in the dark, the knife of a devilishly bad unwomanly woman, writhing in defeat.

He appears twice in the whole story of the Bible, and each time in a crisis, an outstanding crisis. It was in the nation's most terrific moral crisis that he is in action, in the Old Testament. It is approaching the most tragic crisis in our Lord's career, that he appears in the New.

And there are distinct intimations that he is actually to swing into action again, on the earth, in a coming crisis, the worst of all. He is distinctively a crisis man, a crisis leader.

The dramatic abruptness of his appearance in the old Hebrew story is in the very lowest moral sag-down the nation had ever known.

Two bad sags-down stand sharply out, in the long list of moral breaks. It is Samuel that turns the movement up at the first of these. Elijah comes in in the second, the worst of all.

The scene of action is in the North, where the tides of immorality run so strong. It is in the

time of Ahab, the king who set a new standard of immorality and lust, so bad that it became a standard to measure badness by.

The worship of God had been wholly set aside. The priests of Jehovah had been hounded to violent death by the hundreds, under the leadership of the harlot-queen, Jezebel.

The foul lustful Baal worship had been made the state religion. It went to the lowest stage any false religion ever reaches, in enthroning vile unmentionable lust as the national religion.

Things couldn't be worse. Jezebel could have made fresh suggestions to the people of Sodom. It is at such a time, in such a crisis, that this rugged giant figure Elijah appears.

Things were so hardened in their obstinate badness that it took three and a half years to get the king's ear.

Shouts of derisive laughter, without doubt, greeted the bold abrupt announcement to the king, one day, by a hairy-garmented man of the despised Jehovah faith.

There would be no rain, and even no dew, for *years,* not until *he* gave the word, so this tall gaunt outspoken man had boldly declared to the king's very face. And the stinging laughter and derisive taunts were likely in Elijah's ears all those years of waiting.

The Fire Test.

Then follow the rainless blue, the dewless nights, the failing streams and springs, the dying stock, the despairing desperate insistent cry of the nation, the possible danger of a national

uprising by the hunger-bitten crowd, things going steadily from bad to worse and worst.

Under these mad goadings, the surrounding nations are searched for the strange trouble-maker, who does seem, fanatic as he is, surely is, to carry, actually carry, the keys to the sky.

And in the desperation, these neighbouring kings are required to make oath, that they are not harbouring this man. Elijah is the most talked-of man of the day, Elijah the prophet of the despised rejected Jehovah.

Then, as abruptly, Elijah appears again, suggests a national gathering, and a test by fire of the national worship. And the whole nation gathers with a rush, eager to see this daring man, eager for the excitement of the test, yet more eager for the possible rain.

And the lustful prophets of Jezebel and Baal, have their chance, all the day long, under Elijah's sarcastic goading stings.

And the vast crowd, filling the Carmel slopes, watch, and watch all the day; thirsty, hungry, hollow-eyed, embittered, they watch with a growing resentment toward the leaders of lust.

Then, at the early evening hour of sacrifice to Jehovah, so long neglected, the significant twelve-stoned altar is reverently erected, the fuel and the slain bullock in place, and all drenched thoroughly with precious water, while the crowds watch, with staring bulging eyes.

And, then, the simple prayer to Jehovah, ringing out, in terse tones, on the tense air, and on the mob's straining ears; and then, and then, the fire out of the rainless blue!

Fire in abundance, catching wood and sacrifice and altar stones, the very dust; catching? actually burning all to white ashes, and licking up the water.

It wasn't fire simply; it was fire in abundance, leaping, licking, flaming, flashing, eating, devouring, sticking to the job till only ashes, ashes in heaps, staring white heaps, remained.

No wonder the crowds are on their faces, in awe, tumultuously shouting out their decision.

And with simple yet rare leadership, the newly-kindled enthusiasm of the huge crowd is turned to account, in putting to death these vile leaders, of the vile lust, that underguise of religion, was cancerously eating out the vitals of the people.

This is the background of the prayer on Carmel. The whole background of the picture, in clear view, helps one see all the lights and shadows of the scene on Carmel's tiptop.

The king goes to his palace, where his queen is obstinately sulking, biting her lips, moistening her parched tongue with venomous saliva, as she tries to think up some slap-back.

And Elijah goes up to Carmel's height. His task is as yet but half done. The fire test must be followed by the water test, the rain test, the prayer test.

This would be giving the people, and the land, what was so sorely needed. It is more. It is tying the knot, double-knotted, tight and sure, on the thread of the nation's newly-declared allegiance to the true worship, the one Jehovah God.

Away from the wild exultant shouts of the mobbing crowds, Elijah goes up to the quiet of the mountain top. A great task lies ahead.

He goes to do battle with the "prince of the power of the air," with the principalities, the hosts of evil spirits up in the air, in the lower heavens.

And now we gather eagerly, with bated breath, and awed hearts, to watch this old master, *at* prayer, actually praying. We watch his every step as he goes off and prays, and prevails in prayer.

Ear Culture.

And the first thing that catches one's eye, and ear, too, and heart, is his assurance beforehand in the outcome of the prayer. As he turns from the sadly needful task of completely removing the incorrigible leaders of vilest lust, he speaks to the king.

Quietly, decisively, in a matter-of-fact way, as a master, as one who has no doubt, he bids the king go home for some refreshment. For, he says, "*There is the sound of abundance of rain.*"

What ears Elijah had! Sounds of rain! There had been no rain sounds heard for over three years. There were children who didn't know what rain sounds like. They had never heard it.

The swish and dash of the rain on the sides of tent and house, the patter of rain on the roof, the gentle drop and drip, the wild roar down the narrow valley, these were only memories, wistful memories, to most of the nation.

Sounds of rain! What an eager stirring of memory the very words make. The prophet's words to the king are heard, and passed quickly from ear to tongue, and tongue to ear, again. The grapevine telegraphy spreads the word to the farthest edge of the excited crowds.

"Sounds of rain a-coming;" Elijah says it. It must be so. Elijah says so. The fire came! We saw it. He called for it. Now he is calling for rain. Oh rain! Think of it, rain! The rain's coming.

You can hear the ever fickle, excited crowds talking, and nervously laughing. And, on the merely human level just now, the student of mob psychology appreciates the power loosened out by this old-time master of mob psychology.

And the reverent alert student of spirit psychology appreciates the significance of this word, sent on the run, out through the crowding thousands, and tens of thousands.

It would make a difference in the spirit atmosphere of the parched earth. It did make a difference. All this purely on the human level; the lower human level, lower, yet not low, in its subtle power.

What keen ears Elijah had! He could hear what no one else did, or could. How did he know? Is he simply talking for effect? Is he really screwing his courage up to the sticking point for the contest just ahead?

Very thoughtfully it can be said, no; decidedly no; a blunt sharp outspoken no is the answer to that question. He actually heard those rain sounds.

But how could he? They weren't there. That is, there were no actual rain sounds in the atmosphere of Canaan, by the keenest stretching of expectant ears.

And there's an answer. It's an answer that really answers. There's no dodging nor rhetorical evading. Elijah had been off taking a course in ear culture.

For three years and a half, at least, he had been listening, using his ears, listening to a very quiet sound, a gentle sound of exquisite stillness, the sound of God's voice.

No, this is not mere talk, nor rhetorical verbiage. There is a voice of God. Low, quiet, clear, distinct, it does come to the ear, the inner ear, the spirit ear, a very real, practically real, ear. He who has heard that voice knows, and knows well. And some of the sanest people have heard that voice.

Those three and a half years of rainlessness for the nation, had been years of praying for Elijah. Ear culture is the beginning of culture in speech. The ear controls the tongue, down to finest intonation, and subtlest shading of accent.

This old master in the fine art of praying is surely teaching us here. Watching him sends one off to the quiet corner, with the Book.

And the Book is open, and the door is shut, to shut the outside sounds out. Many of these outside sounds have their place in our practical day's round. But they're shut out when we take our ears to school to God's voice.

And the knee is bent, in that ear schoolroom. For the bent knee helps the will to bend. And

the hinge the ear opens on is in the joint of the will.

As the will bends to the higher will the spirit is more sensitively alert. The spirit ear opens. It hears; it hears more quickly; it hears more accurately. We've got one great bit from the old master here.

Skilful Listening.

And it is striking how accurate Elijah's ears were. He said there would be an *abundance* of rain. The storm that actually came proved how accurate that spirit-ear course had been. For when the rain did come it was a great rain.

Long, attentive, quiet, listening makes accurate listening, and accurate hearing. It takes quite a while, and quite a habit, too, to get the outside sounds out of the ear.

Yet you must get them out, and learn to be deaf to them, and get the ears quiet, skilfully quiet, before you begin to hear, and appreciate, and hear accurately, the—sound of the Holy Spirit's voice.

This old master had not simply heard the sounds of rain. He had heard the rushing and gushing, the dashing and splashing, the roar and the rush of wind-swept torrents, and wild mountain streams.

It reminds one of John's word, "of his *fullness* we all received."[1] Some people seem to read the word "skimpiness" in there instead of "fullness." They ask so little. They take so little, as they go crutching along.

[1] John 1:16.

It makes one think, too, of that time Paul piles the words up till they fairly clamber over each other in their eagerness.

Listen: Unto him who is able to do what we *ask;* then what we *think,* too, though it hasn't gotten into words yet; then *all* we ask or think; then *above* all; then a*bundantly* above all; and then he piles it up yet more in *exceeding* abundantly above all.[1]

That makes six degrees of the superlative. Some of us might practise the steps on this six-runged ladder. We may find out the meaning of Elijah's "abundance."

One evening, in one of our Atlantic seaboard cities, we accepted a friend's invitation to hear Walter Damrosch lead the famous New York Symphony Orchestra. It was delightful, watching that master musician, and listening to the rare music.

The next day, out walking with the friend whose guests we were, he said, "Wasn't that *oboe* wonderful?" I dimly remembered that I had heard that word "oboe" before, and I knew it was a musical instrument of some sort, or I thought I knew it.

But evidently my listening was quite different from my friend's listening. I had thoroughly enjoyed the music that evening, yet, evidently, there had not been such skilled, trained listening on my part as with my friend.

He was a trained musician, expert on several instruments. He got far more than I out of

[1] Ephesians 3:20.

that evening of music. I didn't hear the oboe. I certainly didn't distinguish its sound in the music.

So I tried to find out something about the oboe. And I became much impressed with its resemblance to something else, something that we are talking about just now.

The oboe is a wind instrument, very sensitive, with a small very individual penetrating tone. It is used for solo effects, and in giving the pitch to the other instruments of the orchestra.

One might well take an ear course in listening to another oboe, a spirit oboe. It comes to one's ear with an exquisite sound of gentle stillness, as a still small voice.

It is very individual, and very penetrating. It is very sensitive to one's attitude, not so easily heard when ignored. It specializes in individual or solo effects. And it can be used to give the true pitch to the whole orchestra of one's being.

Elijah had trained his ear to hear the voice of God speaking within. He could hear. He did hear. He heeded what that finely attuned voice said.

That made keenly alert accurate hearing. He heard the sound of abundance of rain. This is a great item in watching this old master at prayer. He had trained ears.

The Prayer Room.

Let us take another look at this old master. "Elijah went up to the top of Carmel." This is significant. The dramatic fire test had been

on the lower Carmel slope. Now, he climbs the mountain till he is upon the very tiptop.

This master hand at prayer wants a quiet place. You can pray anywhere, but when one is free to choose, he picks the place, and it is always a quiet place.

When there's a big job of praying on hand, the instant instinct is to get off to some quiet spot. One wants to get his ears free of human voices, and away from the every-day sounds and noises.

There are three kinds of quiet. There's the quiet place, the thick of the forest, the mountain top or hilltop, the roof of a building in a crowded city, and so on.

Then there's the quiet time, the midnight hour, the middle of the night, the early morning hour. The common sounds of daily life have been hushed into silence, or have not yet begun again.

And there is a yet deeper quiet, a trained disciplined quiet, the quiet of one's inner spirit. One can be utterly alone in the rush of the crowded street, keenly alert in a mechanical way, to the movements of the throng, yet absorbed in the deep inner quiet of spirit.

There is no loneliness to be compared with that of being alone, a stranger, in a great densely-crowded city street. And there is no quiet that can be compared with the deep inner quiet of spirit, in the thick of the jostling throng.

It is as though the very outer bustle acts as a stimulant to inner quiet, when the spirit is disciplined, trained, by long practice, and by a firm hold on one's self.

The master hand at prayer, he who would get something of a mastery, must get used to using all three sorts of quiet.

But when there's a big job of praying in hand he covets the quiet place. When he is free to choose, the quiet place is the quick first choice.

One recalls, with a touch of awe, how our blessed Lord, when down here, coveted a quiet place for praying.

After carefully ministering to the needs of the crowds, he would withdraw in some quiet deserted place, to be alone, and pray.

The natural longing for touch with another human, in time of stress, led him to take the three inner intimates in among the trees of Gethsemane.

But the intense longing for utter quiet, in the great spirit struggle in which he was so alone, this leads him to go yet farther in among the trees, where he was quite alone.

Jesus was no recluse, no hermit. He mingled freely among men, and drew the little children to him; he ministered without stint to the needy crowds. But when he prayed he withdrew to some quiet shut-away spot.

The master touch is felt here in Elijah's choice of the place for this stiff bit of prayer conflict. He "went up to the top of Carmel."

Wordless Prayer.

There is a yet more significant touch in the *posture* this old master takes in this bit of siege prayer. "He bowed himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees."

Why, does it make any matter what posture you take in prayer? No, not a particle. Custom rules so much here, and custom differs in different parts.

In Scotland it is quite customary to stand reverently in public prayer, while in England the worshippers kneel with bowed heads. In Turkey the Mohammedan kneels in a stooping posture on his little prayer mat.

I have watched the throngs prostrate themselves, prone on their faces, in St. Isaac's, in old St. Petersburg, since Petrograd, now Leningrad. And that is a common usage in the Greek Orthodox Church. The old-time common custom among the Jews seems to have been to stand in prayer.[1]

Yet the significant thing, to mark thoughtfully, is, that the posture one instinctively takes reveals his inner spirit. Intensity affects the posture in prayer, as in every other action of life. The posture taken, without stopping to think about posture, this at once reveals the inner spirit.

Peter kneels in the tensity of his prayer over Dorcas,[2] even as Stephen had done in the agony of dying, under the stones, yet with his mind so clear.

In the tense parting with the devoted leaders at Ephesus, Paul kneels in that bit of farewell prayer; and the whole multitude, men, women and children, instinctively kneel on the Tyrean seashore as Paul leads in the good-bye prayer.[3]

The posture reveals the tensity of spirit. The

[1] Matthew 6: 5; Mark 11: 25; Luke 18: 11, 13.
[2] Acts 9:40.
[3] Acts 20:36; 21:5.

very earnestness in prayer unthinkingly, half unconsciously, controls the posture in prayer.

The broader fact is, of course, that one's inner spirit continually affects his body. Gesticulating, weeping, knitting the brows, kissing, and so on, when spontaneous, are the outer results of the inner feeling.

And this is peculiarly true in prayer. For prayer, when the expression of some real desire or longing, maybe in some keenly-felt need, prayer itself, true prayer, always has the element of intensity in it.

That intensity may show itself in one in a great outpouring of words, in another in fewer words, but in all, in the posture of body instinctively taken.

And kneeling is in itself an act of submission. It is a yielding to another of greater power. It is an acceptance of another's official authority, or personal power, or both.

It implies obedience. Kneeling could be called the natural, the instinctive, posture in prayer, when custom or habit may not prevent. Of course, the true prayer is in spirit, quite regardless of posture.

Now, look a bit more closely at this rare old master. Note his posture. It would seem to be quite unstudied. There was a tremendous intensity of spirit. He had just come from a terrifically tense scene, which centered in himself.

He felt, into the very quick, the tensity of the present situation, the national need of rain, the expectancy of the vast crowds, their eagerness, and that it all centered in himself.

And he was yet more conscious that it all centered in prayer, this bit of final siege prayer. He was naturally an intense man. Now his intensity was at high pitch.

All this is revealed, in one quick glance, in the posture he instinctively takes in prayer. The inner intensity of spirit draws him, pulls him, down to the earth, with his face between his knees.

It calls to mind, with a fresh touch of awe, that scene under the Gethsemane olives, where Jesus "*fell* on his face."[1] The unspeakable intensity is revealed in the quick, abrupt, falling prone on the ground.

But there is yet more here. And it is a "more" of significance, *and* of practical help, too. There are no words spoken, so far as the simple graphic record shows.

The word "pray" is not used. Yet there never was truer, greater, simpler, intenser, praying. The *posture* was the prayer.

That rugged iron will, that dared the king, and swayed the sullen thousands absolutely, that will is now bent. That straight spare form, commanding the ruler as the lowest subject, it is bent down, low down, and yet lower.

Those eyes flashing denunciation and rebuke upon the cowering crowds, now they are filled with an intense pleading. The very posture was the prayer. The lips were quite too lame for such a prayer as this.

And there's more yet. And it brings the whole simple fact about the meaning of prayer,

[1] Matthew 26:39.

brings it yet closer into the very cockles of one's heart, and the inner action of one's understanding, too. It is this: *The man was the prayer.*

All the years of loyalty to the true Jehovah, in the face of stiffest opposition, were in that tense bowed form. All the despised pleadings with the nation, all the fugitive loneliness by the little Cherith Brook of Gilead;

All the forty-two long long months, are gathered up in that mute figure bowed low. The man was the prayer. Words had given out. The praying of years is now told out in the tremendous language of a person, a presence. The man was the prayer.

Expectancy.

And, as one watches keenly and thoughtfully this rare old master, in what may likely enough have been the most absorbing prayer of his life, one notes quickly, at this point, how mentally alive and alert he is to what is going on around him.

In his prayer, so intense, he is not absent-minded to outside matters. He quietly says to his companion, with a touch of almost the imperious, "Go up now, *look* ——".

He sets a watch. He keeps a man on the lookout while he is prone on his face. He bids his companion get out to some point where he can see clearly and distinctly the first indication of results.

The old master is keenly alert. His mind is on edge, thinking. It is not necessary to be sleepy and stupid to be religious; that is, not

absolutely necessary. You may likely have thought so, some good people you have met.

When the Holy Spirit has right of way, there will be a new birth. That does not mean a new spirit birth merely.

It does mean that surely. But it includes something else, too. There will be a new mental birth. There will be a new life, new vigour, new alertness, in one's mental faculties, and thinking.

Prayer needs a keenly alert mind as well as a warm heart, and a strongly yielded will. And prayer will not only warm the heart, but stir one's thinking, and make it keener.

We sometimes hear about a *blind* faith. Faith is *not* blind, not a simple thoughtful full-rounded faith. It sees. It sees the other side, the difficulties, the things that would work against having faith.

It puts these in the balance. And it insists on believing in a Person, and in a certain result, in spite of the things against it.

Faith has keenest eyesight. It does see all the obstacles, *and* it also sees the favourable side, and it strikes the balance.

I do not at all mean that there will always be an analyzing of things in this way. There will be a quick instinctive *feeling* of things out, an almost unconscious weighing of the things against. And the upshot is a simple steady faith in the outcome, against these disadvantages.

Faith sees the hard heart, the stubborn will, the insolent opposition, the intricate confusion of circumstances. *And,* then it sees *Jesus!*

Greater is *he* than all the things, stubborn, inveterate, humanly impossible, on the opposite side. Faith is a study in proportions.

And so faith *looks*. It looks up, and it looks out. It looks up because it looks out. Elijah's eyes had seen parched fields, dying sheep and cattle, a stubbornly-prolonged drought, a sky permanently cloudless, nights ever dewless.

And he saw *God!* There could be no comparison. There could be only one outcome. So he kept a watchful lookout. He knew rain must come, and would come. So he set a watch for it. "Go up now, *look* ——".

It calls to mind another "lookout." Faithful old Abraham on Moriah, had a heart-rending experience. Then, like a flash, everything changed.

And so he gave a new name to the place "Jehovah-jireh."[1] Literally, in very homely colloquial English, it means, "God will *look out for you.*" As commonly used, that phrase, "look out for you," means assuming the responsibility, practically guaranteeing the outcome as needed.

It is really an answering look Elijah is looking for. Elijah had *looked to* God in all the tremendous events of which he was the center and leader.

Now, he is expecting an answering look. God *looked out for* Elijah. This is the old Arab sheik, Abraham's, terse, tense, homely, way of saying it.

But there is more here. He tells his attendant where to look. "Look *toward the sea.*"

[1] Genesis 22:14.

The rain could come from any point of the compass, but it was likeliest to come from the sea.

That is where their rains usually came from. The east wind, and the south, were dry winds. The desert sent them no rain.

Elijah is expecting tremendous things to occur in nature, but he was expecting them to occur in the natural order. God loves the natural order. Nature is God's method in action.

Faith is intelligent. The simple thinking faculties are in full swing. Prayer is *expectant.* It needs three organs of the face or head, an ear, a tongue and an eye.

The ear is alert. It listens. The tongue can speak. It is under the control of the ear. The eye is open, and wide open. It watches to see what the ear has heard of, and the tongue has asked for.

A Waiting Time.

"*There is nothing to be seen, sir,*" the attendant reports. What's the meaning of this? The crucial time has arrived, but no rain! Lower down that mountain slope the fire came *at once.* But now there's no rain.

Clearly, the fight isn't yet fought *through.* Praying is fighting. This is nothing new to this old master. Prayer is never fully understood until we recognize that it has to do with a spirit conflict, real, intense, ofttimes very stubborn.

Prayer concerns three: God to whom we pray; the man who prays; and the Evil One against whom we pray.

The contest with the "prince of the power of the air" is on again now. It is on in his own realm of action, the air. He had probably tried to have it rain during that long drought.

But he failed. Now, apparently he is trying to hold back the rain. And he is a stubborn fighter. Even when he knows he is defeated, he can hang on in pure malicious stubbornness.

But Hosea says that when God is in action he makes juicy grapes grow in a parched sandy hot-wind-swept desert.[1]

This waiting time is a revealing time, too. It reveals Elijah. He can hold steady through even this testing, waiting, fighting, time.

It was a revealing time *to* Elijah. It reveals anew to him that his only help is, not in his prayer, not in his faith, not in his steadiness, but in *God!*

It reveals anew to the unseen spirit enemy that this Elijah can hold steady, and will, through any siege. It gives Elijah the opportunity of revealing himself, his simple steadiness under fire, his unwavering faith in God's faithfulness, all unconsciously of revealing himself, to God.

In the spirit warfare centering on and around our earth there has ever been a waiting time. Every leader for God has this to go through.

For Noah it meant a hundred and twenty years, with the stinging taunts of the watching crowds in his ears. For Abraham it meant twenty years before Isaac came. For Joseph thirteen years in prison disgrace.

For Moses there is a full forty years in the

[1] Hosea 2:14–15.

desert, and then forty again, in a yet more difficult wilderness; for Hannah a nagging, dogging, teasing, day and night, that seemed endless at the time; for Paul three years in the dreary Arabian wilds.

Aye, there's yet more, with the utmost reverence one remembers Jesus our Lord. It meant for him a generation in Nazareth, a forty days' intensified spirit siege in the Wilderness, a three and a half years of ministry with the hounds ever at his heels, a three days in that new-hewn tomb.

Yes, more yet, nineteen hundred years, up there through the Blue, intently watching things down here till they ripen for the next gracious tremendous step.

With still deeper reverence, let it be said, waiting has meant for God the pain over his world till the ripened fullness of time came, and a yet fuller ripeness still to come.

It has meant for the earth a groaning travailing creation, with its soil wet with tears and blood, and its atmosphere rent with moaning and weeping.

Waiting means *obedience;* that is, holding true to one's clear leading, with the odds and appearances all against you. It means *listening;* that is, holding still, quiet, in your inner spirit, so you can hear the still small voice.

It means *watching;* that is, holding the face up to the light, up to *his face,* so you can quickly catch his leading.

It means *patience;* that is, holding *back* from immature, unwise, unseasoned action. It means

steadfastness; that is, holding *on,* and still holding on to the finish. Waiting takes strength, and it makes strength.

There's more, yet more here. Waiting means four other things. And these four things run along side by side. It means Satan's opposition, sometimes just a malicious hindering when he knows he is defeated on the main thing.

It means a strengthening of the man who waits. There's a deepening, a seasoning, a maturing, a ripening, of his strength, and of himself.

Then, too, waiting means a maturing to full ripeness of God's plan. His plan works out on man's level, the human level, along natural lines. And time is an element in such working out. The waiting means a ripening to full growth.

And, close akin to this, and yet distinctly additional, waiting means full results, great and greater and greatest results. There's rare wisdom in learning how to wait, and in waiting, intelligently deliberately wisely waiting.

This old master at prayer clearly understands all this. He himself likely waited on his face before he could fling the message of defiance in the royal face.

He had just been through forty-two long weary months. He understands. Ah! This man, who is also a master at praying, this old master who is so intensely human, he has become *seasoned in prayer.*

Time is a very real element in the problems of the earth. Big events take time to head up. It is the age-long story of history. The bigger

the event, the tenser the spirit battle, the wider the range of action, the more time it takes.

And the longer the wait, the tenser the fight, the greater the storm when it does break, and the greater the after events, too.

One notes very carefully, as he watches the Carmel Prayer Normal School in action, that there may be a testing time, a waiting time in prayer, a revealing time, a ripening time.

Persistence.

And, now, this old seasoned master, disciplined by long fighting, speaks to his watching companion. Very quiet is his voice, very even and steady its tones, as he simply says, "*Go;* go *again;* go again *seven times.*"

It is the voice of a master, an old master in the fine art of praying. Doubt might begin to wabble, and wonder, and break, under the strain. Laziness might say "Well, maybe it isn't really God's time, or God's way."

Faith, whose ears have heard, whose knees have bent to the One Will, whose eyes have seen God in action just a little before, faith simply says, "Again, go again, go again seven times."

Seven times practically means until the rain comes. Faith doesn't bother with mere common mathematics, even though it may use common language.

And so, one notes thoughtfully Elijah's *persistence* in prayer. The spirit of persistence isn't troubled with the mathematics of mere counting. "Seven times" means "seventy times seven," and then the count lost, disregarded,

merged in the joyous expectancy of what must come under such circumstances.

Elijah's an old hand at prayer. His voice quietly, incisively, cuts the air. It's the voice of the prayer for the rain to stop, the voice of the three and a half years of carrying the key of the sky in his hands, the voice of the devouring fire falling on the sacrifice, that voice, vibrant with expectancy, persistent expectancy, simply says, "Again; go; go again until—rain!"

This is really his third big "go" at this big national problem he has tackled. There was getting the rain and dew stopped. There was the devouring fire out of the sky.

Now, there's getting the rain back again. The odds are with it. Two out of three meant for him the third. The rain would come. He knew it. No opposition could hold it back. He hadn't the least idea of quitting.

"Again"; "go again"; until the waters of the sky drench the land. Victory well begun means further persistence. Persistence always wins out, with a rush. There are no exceptions to this principle. The old master is giving us a rare point for victory here.

The Flood-tide.

Then the turn comes, the great turn, yet so simple in outward seeming. It is so simple that Elijah's attendant didn't sense what had happened.

He was a young man, this companion attendant, probably a mere youth, utterly devoted to his master. Back and forth he makes the

trip between the lookout point and the master on knees and face.

He comes back again the seventh time, and says, "There is a cloud, sir, on the far horizon, but it is so little; why, it's no bigger than your hand!"

Quick as a flash Elijah's on his feet. His keen quick recognition of victory at hand makes him feel already the swish of the wind in his face before it has begun to blow. He sends the word to the king, with special advice to make speed lest the oncoming storm cause him delay.

Recognition of the victory at hand when nobody else senses it, ah! this is indeed the master revealing his rare mastery.

A little bit of a cloud, just forming itself on the surface of the water, far out, meant to his skilled, trained experience a great storm.

It really may have been there the fifth or the sixth time, but so little, so insignificant, that the youth's unskilled eye had not detected it. Steady looking makes keener looking. Long looking, frequent looking, makes keener quicker eyes.

Recognition is surely a master touch. A glance of the eye, a hardly perceptible change in the tone of the voice, a soft touch of a hand, a changed attitude in some wholly casual matter, a something indefinable in the spirit atmosphere, and one keen enough to see with his spirit eye, knows the result prayed for has already begun to come.

And so now "a little while," and the whole heavens are black with the clouds and wind, and

the rain pours down in torrents. A little cloud tells of a great storm. A little while, and the overwhelming victory is in full swing.

"A little while; how little! How little! And he that cometh shall come and shall not tarry any longer."[1] The promised result is "panting breathlessly" toward the coming fulfillment.[2]

Yet how long "a little while" can seem to hearts stretched out on tenter hooks. And yet, and yet, we call nature slow. Yet nature is the natural thing. It's the fever in the blood that calls it slow.

"Not so in haste, my heart!
Have faith in God and wait;
Although He seems to linger long,
He never comes too late.

He never comes too late,
He knows what is best;
Vex not thyself—it is in vain:
Until He cometh, rest.

Until He cometh, rest,
Nor grudge the hours that roll;
The feet that wait for God—'tis they
Are soonest at the goal;

Are soonest at the goal
That is not gained by speed;
Then hold thee still, O restless heart,
For I shall wait His lead."[3]

[1] Hebrews 10:37 literal reading; with Haggai 2:6.
[2] Habakkuk 2:3 literal.
[3] Bayard Taylor.

Waiting, strong, intelligent, Spirit-suggested waiting, means—victory? No, no, that's too tame, too tame. It means sweeping overwhelming victory. It means the wind-swept heavens, the rain-soaked earth, the gentle noiseless fertilizing dews beginning their rhythm again.

Waiting meant for Noah that the ridiculed ark on dry land did float off, over the mountain tops, and saved a race for a fresh start, a new opportunity.

It meant that Abraham did have an heir, born against all human, natural likelihood. And that he was the son, and more, the inheritor of the traits of a changed, matured, refined-in-the-furnace father.

Waiting meant for Joseph, in place of a disgraced prison, a world throne, the privilege of ministering to a whole race of men.

It meant for Hannah a babe at her breast. It meant in time, a changed nation, through the man, who was made the rare man he was, by the experience-changed woman who mothered him before and after birth.

That Arabian desert waiting meant for Paul a ministry actually as wide as the known world, and reaching clear down to our own time.

Softly, with a tender touch of reverence, waiting meant for our Lord Jesus, an empty tomb, an ascension cloud, an opening heavens, the cities of the earth a-thrill with the message and power of his Name, a seat at the Father's right hand.

And there's more, too. For it will yet mean his actual sway in the life of the race, down on

this same old earth. It will mean the heart that once broke with grief "satisfied" with the outcome.[1]

It will yet mean for the old earth a new Eden, as wide as the outer horizon, and as enriched as only the Calvary sacrifice, and true human culture, can make it.

And the Carmel aftermath brings out the fine traits of this rugged old master at prayer. There was the rare exhibition of patriotism in his fine public homage to the discredited king.

There is, too, the human traits brought out under that coniferous juniper tree, weak human traits. But not one of us can throw a stone here.

The terrific tension of the duel with the king, and the mob, and the evil spirit world, had pulled his bodily strength out to the utmost.

That juniper tree still shelters many, with far less reason, who might well follow Elijah, away from its shade, down to the fresh Horeb touch, and shelter, and new start.

A Graduate Course in Love.

It was said, a bit ago, that love, the real rare thing of love, is the solution of every sore problem, and the only solution, the only true solution.

Commonly, one does not think of this rugged old Hebrew as an outstanding illustration of love. Is that, possibly, in part, because we don't appreciate what love is? its strength, its purity, its insistence on the right, as well as its tenderness and faithfulness and unfailing devotion?

[1] Isaiah 53: 11.

He had given a death blow to the worst lustful worship any people has known, a lust that was eating out the very vitals of the nation's life. That was the purity of love in tremendous action.

He had locked up the skies, long enough to break the stubbornness of the autocratic sovereign, and bring the people to their knees. There was the strength of love.

He had proven by the visible fire test the faithfulness of the nation's despised God. There was the faithfulness of love, revealing to the befooled people their one true God.

He had fought with the unseen spirit forces of the upper air until the rain came, enough, and more, for all their needs. There was the heroism, and the tenderness, of love greatly blended.

Yet, without any doubt, Elijah had a new lesson in the gentleness of love, its healing balm, its graciousness, and tenderness, in that post-graduate course, early one morning, in the cave at Horeb.

There had been some earlier teaching bits under that aromatic juniper. The fire of coal, the cake baken, the jar of water, twice over, and the gentle word of friendly counsel, how refreshing it had all been, not only to his jaded body, but to his lonely spirit.

After all some one cared. How refreshing little creature comforts and attentions are in the time of depression of spirit, and tense weariness of body.

It was a new Elijah that wended his thought-

ful way back home again. The old traits of love were there, but now a new tenderness.

For Elisha reveals the spirit of the Horeb-taught Elijah. It is the doubled birthright portion of the spirit of the new Elijah that is bequeathed to his successor.

The Horeb graduate in the school of love, with its exquisite sound of gentle stillness calling to lessons, is revealed in Elisha. For Elisha is distinctly the man of the healing touch. He was always helping people in homely ways.

Elijah's name means "*my* God is *Jehovah.*" It was really a nickname, a character name, nicked in deep in the minds of the people. It was the name commonly given by his neighbours and by the nation. For nicknames always grow up on the lips of the crowd.

Elijah's commonly-used name was used in a sharp contrast. The enthroned harlot, Jezebel, said, "*Baal* is God," and she said it in loud imperious tones.

Weak-kneed, licentious, dissipated Ahab echoed the queen's words, and the crowds commonly echoed it, as crowds will, till it filled the air.

Elisha's name likewise grew out of his best-known characteristic, God is a *Saviour*-God, healing, helping, comforting, saving. It is really the new name of the newly-taught Elijah, down at the Horeb school of love.

Elijah had thrust in the lancet knife, surgically cutting out the fatal tissue, to save the nation's life. That is the heroism, the courage, of love.

Elisha tenderly binds up the wound, and

nurses the patient back to strength again. That is the tenderness, the faithfulness, of love.

And so Horeb is the sequel to Carmel. The caution of true love still persists. When Elijah returns home, it is cautiously, by the roundabout route of the Damascus desert.

For the treachery of an enraged, desperate, unwomanly, woman is still in the heat of its hot passion. A knife, the dark of night, and a lonely road, may still conspire to spill out her spleen.

But Horeb emphasizes the tenderness of the love whose purity blazed out at Carmel. The people needed both. Now they need peculiarly the tenderness of love, its healing, and comfort.

Love *is* the solution of every problem, the only one. It can answer the sore tantalizing question. And its answer is the only full answer.

Love's tender, tenacious, clinging thread, hanging out of the puzzle, will unravel it. And it won't unravel any other way. It won't yield to any other tugging thread. The crisis yields to the touch of true strong pure love, and only so.

And, very thoughtfully, one repeats, with a new understanding of the meaning, the old words, *"God is love."* All that love is, in its purity and strength, its heroism of action, its tenderness and unfailing faithfulness, that's what God is.

He it was that stirred and stimulated this old master, Elijah, in all he did before Carmel, and on its summit, and then drew him down to Horeb for a graduate course.

Love, God, would pull us to our knees. It, he,

would lead us up to Carmel's tiptop for the outstanding victory, and to Horeb's cave for the fresh tendering touch.

Then our problems will solve. Our questions will find a full answer. Our puzzle will unravel, and our crisis clear. And the air will ring with the joyous praise, "Glory to Jesus."

Love the One Solution.

One foggy morning, in a crowded part of old London, a blind ragged beggar sat by the curb, playing on an old disreputable-looking violin.

But nobody heard. Nobody noticed. The crowd hurried on unheeding. The old hat upturned for kindly coins was quite empty. And the player's face was wistfully weary and forlorn.

A tall, slender, black-haired man came by. He seemed caught by the strains of music. He gave one quick glance at the beggar-player, his dejected face, the empty hat, the greasy-looking violin.

With a simple kindly word he asked if he might try the violin. And reaching quietly down he took it out of the hand of the wondering beggar.

Then he took his stand at the beggar's side, as though his companion and partner. And he began to draw the bow across the strings, very gently, very lightly.

Instantly strangely sweet, plaintive, pleading tones breathed softly out into the heavy foggy morning air. Some spirit being seemed speaking, in appealing tones, out of the tense

strings. The effect was instantaneous and impelling.

At once the hurrying passers-by stopped, as though a spirit hand had reached out and caught them. They stood listening intently under the strange spell of the music. The crowd quickly grew. Travel was quite stopped.

A pause in the music, the hat slightly tipped forward with the toe of the player's boot, the situation sensed, and copper and silver rained into the bedraggled hat. And the beggar's sightless face revealed his astonishment and delight. His outlook on life was quite changed.

The tender-hearted, deft-fingered musician was Paganini, the world's famous violinist. His fellow musician's sore need touched his heart. His exquisitely skilled touch drew out the music that was in the old strings.

His tender heart and rare skill gave his fellow violinist the sorely-needed lift. Then with a cheery word, and a smile, he slipped away through the crowd and was gone.

It was the same violin in the hands of the two men. But it took the master to bring out what was in. The violin contained all the beggar needed. The master made it available for practical use.

The sore problem of the next meal, the question of the rent due, the puzzle of mere existence, the crisis of need, all were most likely in the poor beggar's bewildered brain.

The instrument contained in itself the possible meeting in full of all these. But it took the master to make the possibilities realities.

And it was the *heart* of the master that stirred him to action. Pity, sympathy, a tenderness, a warmth at his heart, a wish to help, these were love in practical action.

The master drew from the strings, the solution, for a time at least, of the beggar's problems, the answer to his question, the untangling of his puzzle, the clearing of his crisis of need.

And quite likely there had been a dumb prayer in the beggar's heart as he sat by the curb, and then a ringing song of praise.

We have been watching a master, a rare old master in prayer, *at* prayer. We have seen him draw the king to a reluctant submission, and the nation down on its face in worship.

We have watched him draw the vindicating fire from out the clear sky, and the sorely-needed rain in torrents from out the rainless blue.

We have seen the purity and strength and heroism of love grow into a new tenderness of love.

And so the sore problem was solved, the stubborn question answered, the defying puzzle unravelled, and the nation's grave crisis cleared.

And, mark keenly, one of themselves, a fellow Jew, was the human leader in the doing of it all. And it was a true love in him that stirred the action from start to finish.

May it not be that watching this rare old master will send us to school to another Master, our Lord and Master.

For none could pray like him. And none can teach like him. And none can kindle anew the tender fires of a pure love as he can.

And so our problems, yours and mine, and questions, and puzzles, and crises, will remain only as memories, fragrant with the Master's own touch, *through our prayer.*

Jesus, our Lord Jesus, thou master of man, thou master of human life, thou master man and more, thou rare master of prayer, teach us, too, to pray.

Thou art one of us down here, very bone and blood of us. Thou didst make us like thyself back there in Eden's garden. Thou didst make thyself like us, in all our true humanness, back there in Bethlehem. Thou art indeed one of us.

Thou dost know about things down here by the tense feel. Thou didst live amongst us. Thou didst die for us, in the unspeakably great love of thy heart.

Thou art the solution of every impossible problem, the answer to every unanswerable question, the untangling of every haunting puzzle, the master hand in every breaking crisis; and thou art the only one.

We come to thee. We come to thee all anew. We trust thee as Saviour. We yield our lives to thee as Master.

We come to thee to be taught about prayer. For when we have learned that we have the open door to all.

Teach us, thou Jesus, our Saviour and Lord, for thy Name's sake. Amen.

VIII

PAUL ON HIS KNEES IN ROME

A Prayer Strategist.

PRAYER came first in Paul's strategy. And Paul was a rare strategist, the rarest spirit strategist of the whole Christian world.

Strategy is a fighting word. A strategist is a general, a militarist. Strategy has to do with the planning of the whole action of a war. It studies critically the entire field, the enemy field as well as its own.

It looks critically over the forces available on both sides. Then it plans, as shrewdly as possible, such arrangement of the armies at command, and such action, as is likeliest to bring decisive victory.

A war is really a game, a terrific, tragic, terrible, game, between two men, two generals, the two strategists, pitting brains and will power and armed forces against each other.

Now Paul was a rare strategist, an outstanding spirit strategist. He was a fighting man, first and foremost. Life was a fight to him. His letters are full of this sort of talk. And it was no mere rhetoric with him. It was grim deadly reality.

The earth, with its spirit atmosphere, was the battlefield. The forces arrayed against each other were unseen spirit forces, unseen but real, far more real than things seen.

Man is the high prize being fought for. The earth, man's domain, goes with the man, whichever way the thing turns out. This is Paul's philosophy.

And in this warfare prayer comes first, in Paul's understanding. In all his skilled strategy prayer, properly manned and manœuvered, played the first, the leading part. Prayer is a spirit force, dynamic in its energy, quite beyond measurements and standards.

It is not the only weapon or force in the spirit strategy, not by any means. But it reckons first. It affects all others. It affects them beyond all calculation. It comes first. It comes last. And there is no middle, first and last touch in an unbreakable unity.

This is the judgment of this seasoned old fighter, this spirit strategist, Paul. Prayer was put at the top in all his strategic plannings.

Paul is a giant from any and every point of view. He and Moses are the two outstanding figures in the action of the whole Bible story. He is the Moses of the New Testament, as Moses is the Paul of the Old.

Their activities dominate the story. And their writings make up a large part of the Book. Both are men of action, and both men of rare literary ability.

Paul came of an old aristocratic family, of which he was justly proud. He was a Hebrew of the Hebrews. The best Hebrew blood coursed in his veins, and the noblest Hebrew tradition was honoured in his family record.

He was a man of culture, rare, unusual, broad,

ripe culture. His native city, Tarsus, was a university center, sitting on the dividing, connecting ridge between Orient and Occident, with the best culture of both, and of the Hebrew world as well. These three cultural tides swept its scholastic shores. And the man proved an apt pupil and scholar in such surroundings.

Paul was a born leader, and trained in leadership. He had all the bold initiative blended with shrewd caution, which is essential in strong leadership. He reveals the rare organizing genius, with the painstaking care, and the steady patience, so indispensable in ripe strong leadership.

His personal traits are notably striking. The keen logic of the philosopher, the gracious suavity of the polished gentleman, the oratorical power that can hold an antagonistic crowd at bay by sheer force of speech and personality, he blends these in rare degree.

The faithfulness of a true friend, the longing for sympathy and sympathetic understanding, the tenderness of personal touch, the mastery of subtle expression with the pen, the self-sacrifice of real heroism, what a blend in his personality these traits make!

The aggressive intensity of his very being gives the touch of objective reality to his conversion. It was this rarely seasoned judgment, these trained critical faculties, this terrifically intense nature, that made the most radical face-about ever known, on that Damascus road, in the full blaze of the noontide flood of sunlight.

The Strategic Prayer Center.

This is the man we are to watch for a bit, on his knees, in Rome. We are watching a master among masterful men, an old master indeed, in his rare skill and touch and output.

He is *on his knees.* It is the strategic posture. It gives the clue to all his strategy. He is on his knees *in Rome,* the world center of his day. It is the strategic center of world action.

And Rome is the throbbing heart of a planet, the *earth.* This is the third degree, the superlative degree, of strategy.

The earth may, or may not, be the material center of the universe. There are able scientists on both sides of that.

But it is quite unquestionably the *moral* center of the universe. The eyes of the upper spirit world, and the lower, are glued here, breathlessly watching the action on this earth.

The central planet of a universe, the central city of that planet, a man there, a rarely-masterful human, bended low down on his knees, while his keen eye takes in the whole spirit action centering here, what a study is here!

The hour of the world's day is most significant. The racial clock had run down, morally. All agreed, and agree, on this. It had struck midnight. The day had run out.

The subtle air currents of the planet were a-thrill with a something, a some One, coming. All speak of this. And a man had come; a man? *the* man, kin to all, yet distinctly separate from and above all.

He had lived. He had taught, and done things. Then he had, of his free accord, yielded to death. He said it was for a race, a world, in a distinctive sense.

Then he had spurned the grave. The earth could no longer hold him in its relentless grasp. And his Name, the throbbing power of it, had gone out to the ends of the known world, literally, actually.

The incomparable strategy of the Holy Spirit in that Pentecost event has not even yet been appreciated. I mean, simply, just now, as a bit of strategy.

At the least, five thousand men are involved, not persons, men, the natural leaders. They are Jews, the most intense racial group. They are from every city center of the known world, literally.

They are devout pilgrims to the religious festival of their people. They witness the crucifixion of Christ, and, at least five hundred of them, his resurrection.

They had been through that untellable experience of the Pentecostal flooding of the Holy Spirit, the tongues of flame, the rushing shaking wind, the speaking of every common foreign tongue, the burning message of a crucified risen Messiah-Christ, rung out in exultant praise.

That experience could never be forgotten, nor gotten over. It burned itself into their very being, scarred itself in, blessedly scarred. Every man was revolutionized by it, into the very roots of his being.

Now, *now*, these men are scattered, literally,

actually, they are scattered out over the whole known world. And, be it marked keenly, they are scattered to the city centers of the earth, the centers of spreading influence.

Every city center heard the story, saw evidence of a supernatural power, *felt* the power. The earth was a-flame with the Christ Name, the Christ story, the Christ power.

As a bit of pure strategy the thing arouses profound regard. There is nothing to be compared with it, as a bit of mere strategy.

This is *the setting* of this man's life work. There was a new force at work in the old worn-out world.

The pierced Hand had reached out and wound up that racial clock. The dial had been turned for the dawning of a new day.

Already the long slender lines of light were reaching eagerly to the farthest horizon. The clear shining after rain had started everywhere.

And this man's detail was not to the Jew. It was to the outer non-Jewish world, that was listening, so intent, to the Jew-echoing of the Jesus' Name and power.

Paul's errand was actually world-wide. Even to far-off Spain, on the very fringe of the known world, he had, pretty clearly, gone.

It touches one's heart to repeat, with full reverence, that wherever Jesus' Name was known, Paul's name, too, passed from lip to lip, in praise or criticism.

And it is striking, from the strategic point of view, to note that the main direction of his movement is toward the West.

The needle of the compass of stagnation has, for centuries, pointed dominantly east and south, reckoning from the Middle-of-the-Earth Sea, the Mediterranean.

The needle of the compass of need points, where? Everywhere. It is pulled out and down, violently, at every point of the horizon.

The needle of the compass of the Holy Spirit points—everywhere, too; with the plain markings, in stone, and in life, out in far China, and India, in those early centuries, and until this hour.

But the needle of the compass of progress, racial movement of progress, that needle points distinctively, decisively west. And it is dominantly toward the west that this master of strategy moves.

The Ephesian London.

From cultured Antioch, on the Orontes River, he went out, through Little Asia, and Greece, and Rome, and far Madrid, likely, in old Spain, burning like the intense flame he was.

And, *and,* everywhere he went, he put prayer first, and last, and refused any middle ground between untouched by it. The strategy of territorial sweep always hinged, with this man, on the strategy of spirit, on prayer.

The strategy of city center touching the widest radius of the crowds, went hand in hand with, and was secondary to, a yet subtler, deeper, higher, strategy, the spirit strategy, reaching out to the unseen forces.

This then is the man, the master, we are to

watch a bit. And it reveals the man most, that we learn most of him as we watch him *at prayer*. For he is a master at prayer.

And he reveals his rare mastery as a strategist in this, that prayer had the pivot place in all his strategy. Everything began and centered and revolved about prayer, in his intense life.

That strangely resistless power on the old Damascus road, pulled him down to his knees and face. And he never got over it. The knee habit persisted to the tragic end.

It was while on his knees there, in the open, that the voice came so singularly clear, outlining his future career. And that voice became inseparably connected with his knee habit ever after.

It is no marvel that prayer had such an intimate place in his life. He is still on his knees, as the Roman official came, on the Appian Road, to give him a quick exit out and up and in, to the full life the other side the blue.

Paul's letters take us into this holy of holies of his inner life. You can often see a whole landscape clear to the horizon through a thin crack in a fence.

There is many an unintended crevice in these heart-throbbing letters. They give rare pictures of the inner heart of this rarely-human man, this master of men. And they give pictures in living glowing colours of this master of prayer, *at* prayer.

There's a story in itself in these letters, of Paul's inner prayer life, a rare story. It would be immensely helpful to pick out the prayer

threads, a word here, a phrase there, and weave them into the fabric of a story. It would make a rare bit of tapestry.

In every one he tells how he is praying for these spirit children whom he has fathered. He tells them what he is praying for, and what he is praising for, too.

The very form of the epistle tells ofttimes how strong the prayer habit is with him. It actually shapes his mental processes, and his pen. And the intensity of the language, reveals his own intensity in prayer, and, too, what an intense thing prayer itself was to him.

An illustration of this is in his word "strive," with variations of "striving" and in the old version "conflict" and "labour." The word underneath is a fighting word.[1]

These epistles of Paul's are the throbbing of his great heart, like a warm quick pulse-beat, through the fine distinctions of his keenly incisive mentality.

They are not the leisurely product of a scholar, in his cloistered study, surrounded by books. They are more like the sparks thrown off, by the striking of his great brain and great heart on the anvil of the tense problems ever pressing tumultuously in.

For clear incisiveness, close logical reasoning, fineness of distinction, and yet, through all, the throb throb of a great warm heart, they are incomparable in any literature.

But there is one epistle peculiarly that lets us

[1] See for illustration Colossians 1:29; 2:1; 4:12–13. Romans 15:30; and many others.

see this man on his knees. In its pages, in a rarely distinctive way, this old master, unconsciously, lets us look in and see him on his knees.

It is the one commonly called the Epistle to the Ephesians. It is the more striking, in this connection, because it is quite clearly meant to be a circular letter. It was sent, not to one church simply, but also to the whole group of churches circling round-about Ephesus.

We will understand the value of this Ephesian letter better, if we get this city of Ephesus in our minds, clear and fresh in this connection.

It will make the facts stand sharply out if one remembers that Ephesus was then a center of world action, as not now. It could quite accurately be spoken of as the London of Asia Minor, or the New York. It was the most populous city of all that populous land.

The tides of life surged strongly back and forth in that great peninsula. With its congeries of races and nationalities, it had been covetously fought over by all the great world powers, both eastern and western. It was the whole world in miniature. And Ephesus was the beach where every ebb and flood was strongly marked.

One appreciates afresh the strategy of this rarest strategist, when it is recalled that he centered all his vast energy here, continuously, for two to three years.

And here there was a power marking and attending his ministry, to a degree unknown elsewhere. There's a group of evidential miracles of healing quite distinctive. It makes

the strategic importance of this city stand out with peculiar prominence.

And it was to this same Asiatic metropolis that John turned, for some years, after being released from his Patmos prison.

Ephesus was a loud sounding-board, for all that immensely populous strategic peninsula of the Taurus Mountains and plains and seaboard.

All that dwelt in this eastern world of peninsular Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and all others.

The Prayer Epistle.

The characteristics of Paul's letters are marked. Romans is distinctively a teaching epistle. Galatians, Philippians, and the two Corinthians, as well as the two Thessalonians, are dealing, in great plainness and tact, with the peculiar problems troubling those churches.

The Hebrews Epistle seems clearly an attempt, through some talented devout Jewish disciple of Paul's, to encourage the Christian Jews, in the thick of sorest persecution, tempting them to throw over their new-found faith.

The two Timothys and Titus are of course, personal letters to these young men, and Philemon an exquisitely-phrased letter to the Christian owner of this converted run-away slave.

But this Ephesian circular letter, written to the whole group of churches, in this teeming world of Little Asia, this is distinctively Paul's *prayer* epistle.

It seems to have been written, literally, on his knees. Certainly its form and phraseology sug-

gest that. Its structure is fascinating. It is cast in the form of prayer.

There is a connecting phrase running through it, like the unifying strain in a symphony or oratorio. It is a very striking phrase. It is this: "*For this cause I bow my knees.*"[1] Paul is on his knees as he writes or dictates. He had started twice before to say what the thing is he is specially praying for them.

Each time, with that rare intensity, he goes off, in the fullness of his heart, on some kindred word of counsel, then back again to the main thing. He never loses the main thread.

The letter begins with what proves to be a mingling of praise and prayer that they might appreciate, and enter into, an intelligent understanding of God's plan for them, and through them.[2]

Then he begins again to explain the prayer in his heart for them, "for this cause I," and he goes off again into the actual prayer he is making for them.[3] And this fills out that first chapter.

Then chapter two is a parenthesis, throughout, growing out of the prayer. He is still playing on the same string.

Then he picks up his connecting phrase again. Perhaps a shift of his knees brings him back. And so again he begins, "for this cause I Paul," and again he is off on a wonderful parenthesis, in his eagerness to have them understand the marvel of God's plan for them.[4]

[1] Ephesians 3: 14 with 1: 15 and 3: 1.
[2] Chapter 1: 3–14. [3] Chapter 1: 15–23. [4] Chapter 3: 1–13.

At last he gets to the prayer deep down in his heart, the prayer he had gone to his knees, once again, to offer for them. And what a prayer that closing paragraph of the third chapter is, with the gracious piled-up benediction on the end.[1]

Now, the words of fatherly counsel, always so needful, that he puts in, grow out of the prayer. "Therefore,"[2] because of how he is led to pray, this homely counsel is given.

The counsel is suggested by the prayer, and grows out of the prayer. Their "walk" or daily life is stressed, with special words for wives and husbands and children and servants. That would cover all.

The Prayer Paragraph.

And then comes the knot on the end, the great prayer paragraph.[3] This seems to have been what he had in mind as he went to his knees. He gathers up in this paragraph all his teachings on prayer.

It is the great outstanding passage on prayer in all of Paul's writings. He wants to have them understand clearly about the action of prayer. It is the great outstanding passage of the whole Bible on the meaning, the strategy, of intercessory prayer.

Let us then look at this tremendous climactic bit on prayer. Let us draw near, with bated breath, as we watch and listen to this old master of the fine strategy of prayer.

[1] Chapter 3: 14–21. [2] Chapter 4 to 6: 9.
[3] Ephesians 6:10–20.

We keep our Bibles open at Ephesians, six, ten to twenty. The first bit is about *emphasis.* This old master strategist gives us a lesson in proportions, in keeping the true balance, so the big thing will stand out.

If Paul's words are put into simple every-day English, it will help make clearer just what he is saying.

He says: Now the thing to emphasize is this, be bold in action, as the Spirit guides, reckoning on Jesus.[1]

Here are three very striking things. Boldness in action stands out as the big thing. Be daring. Do the brave, the daring, the bold, thing. Here is the main line of strategy in prayer. Here is the key to all Paul's world-wide campaigning. It makes one think of Foch. When everything is against you *attack.* Defensive warfare never wins. He wins who keeps the initiative in action.

Then follows quickly, without even the pause of a punctuation point, this: *as the Spirit guides.* Ah! This is significant. This makes one stop at once. This is big with meaning.

There's a check on that boldness. There's a modifying of one's action. It must be *as* the Holy Spirit leads, so, wholly so, only so, never other than so.

The leading of the Spirit is the one dominant law in all life, and in all service, *and* in all prayer.

And the third bit comes in hot on the heels of this. It is: *reckoning on Jesus.* This is the

[1] Ephesians 6:10.

emergency bit. This is for the pinch, when you are hemmed in by enemy action, and can see no possible way out.

Boldness stirs the enemy. Certainly it stirs our unseen spirit enemy. He does his best and utmost and worst. He'll make things as tight and hot for you as he can.

But then you know this ahead. You know it in planning the bold action. You are prepared. You have reserves. They are unconquerable. In the pinch, reckon on your reserves. Reckon on Jesus, our blessed Victor and Lord.

This is the beginning of this prayer paragraph. This is the beginning of prayer strategy, *the Holy Spirit's leading,* clearly understood, intelligently appreciated, accepted without any "buts" or "ifs." This is the leading line in life, and service, and prayer.

Then comes bold action. And, mark keenly, that the Holy Spirit's leading always calls for bold action. With full reverence be it thoughtfully said, that the Holy Spirit is a great strategist.

He takes the initiative. He keeps it. He who follows him will be bold, modestly, unassumingly, quietly, but daringly bold. Never presumptuous; no jumping from the pinnacle of the temple at some one's else suggestion.

The bold action will always be at the Holy Spirit's direction, and only so. One learns to wait until he leads, and leads clearly. And his leading, followed, makes the next step clearer.

And then the strategy covers the enemy's angry, malicious, maddened, slap-back, with all

the venom and force possible. Reckon on Jesus. All the resistless power of Jesus is at your finger tips, as the need may be. He never fails. He can't. He won't. He doesn't. Hold steady. Keep quiet within. But never flinch. The victory will come because of—Jesus, our wondrous Victor Lord.

This is the beginning of this prayer paragraph. It is certainly very significant. We are surely learning a lot about how to pray here.

Four Things.

And, now, this old prayer strategist says, in effect, that there are *four things* to get clear, and keep clear. The first thing is this: *Prayer is warfare,* spirit warfare. It is fighting, stiff real fighting.

Note carefully the language used here, "armour," "the whole armour," "breastplate," "shield," "fiery darts," "sword," "helmet." These are all fighting words.

"Wrestling" is, of course, an athletic word. But the actual wrestling in the Roman arena, in Paul's day, was no athletic contest.

It was a fight, and a fight to the finish. The loser of the fight usually was the loser of his life, too.

The trained wrestler was skilful in knowing just how to deal the one rightly-placed blow, when his antagonist was in his grip, that meant sure instant death. And that blow was given without hesitation.

This may seem startling sort of talk to some. Well, it's Paul's sort. It's strategic talk. It

opens the way to victory. Clearer thinking makes stronger action, and quicker surer results. This is Paul's first bit. Praying is action in warfare.

And, the second bit follows hard on the heels of this. *Get the enemy out in the clear.* Understand who it is you're fighting, and who it is that is opposing and fighting you.

There's a "not" here, to clear the air. Our fighting is "*not* against flesh and blood." It is *not* against the men and women who oppose us, so craftily, so maliciously and slanderously, so meanly, so persistently, so bitterly.

These poor befooled people are only pawns on the board. There's a master spirit strategist, cunningly, sneeringly, heartlessly, moving them, here and there at will.

This is a great help, getting this clear, a great relief. These people certainly can put up a stiff ugly fight, and do, and seem to get satisfaction out of doing it.

Poor befooled dupes! How the spirit enemy, behind the scenes, laughs at them, and the ease with which they can be moved, this way and that, on the board.

These people themselves need help. Yet there is no greater play for real caution, the caution of real wisdom, than in helping such as these poor befooled dupes of the Evil One. For they may be in Christian circles, with religious phrases on their lips. Yet how stingingly real and actual their fighting is!

There is great help here. There is freedom, a new sweet freedom of spirit. There can be

freedom from all personal enmity, and bitterness, and the like. And what a freedom this is!

There must needs be keen caution, clear discernment, discretion in look and word and attitude, oftentimes. But there can be real liberty of spirit.

The love of God can flood the heart, while one is yet in close personal touch with those actively fighting our most earnest efforts.

That very flood of love will grow caution, gentle reserve, guarded speech, and all this sort of thing, in outer contacts.

It does give a rare liberty within, a freedom, a gracious peace in the heart, in the thick of smoke and fog, of shot and shell and poison gas. That "not" of this old master helps greatly.

The Prayer Enemy.

Having cleared the ground thus far, Paul goes on to tell who the enemy is against whom our fighting, our prayer-fighting, is pitted.

It is the principalities, the powers, the rulers of the world of darkness, the hosts of wicked spirits in the lower heavens. Here are words commonly used for political organizations of nations, among us humans down on the earth.

There is a vast population of evil spirits. They are thoroughly organized. Their headquarters are in the lower heavens, that is the heavens of the clouds encircling the earth.

Their sphere of activity is the earth itself. Their objective in this spirit warfare is the control of the earth and of the human race. This

is what Paul points out as the enemy against whom we are fighting in prayer.

It will make things clearer to recall that there are three populations of intelligent beings on our earth. There is the human population which the various national census takes count of.

There is this countless host of evil spirit beings. There is another vast host, as numerous, at least, as this other, and as thoroughly organized, at least.

These are the good spirits whom we commonly call angels. They are under the sway and control of our Lord Jesus. In vast countless numbers, they swarm our earth, our streets and roads, our cities and our homes, ever eagerly absorbed in their blessed ministry of protecting and helping us.

In talking here about this evil spirit enemy, it is good to keep the other world, of good angel beings, clearly in mind, and that they are under the direction of our Lord Jesus, our faithful Friend.

At the head of this vast evil army is he who is called here in this prayer letter, "the prince of the power (or powers) of the air."[1]

And it is plainly said here, in so many words, that men who refuse to be followers of Christ are directly under the active control of this evil spirit prince, and these evil spirits whom he rules and uses.

It is further striking and immensely helpful to notice the chief characteristic of this warfare, on the evil side. "Wiles;" that is, cunning

[1] Ephesians 2:2.

deceit, lies of every shade and sort; deliberate methodical crafty fraud, underhand trickiness. All this is in the word underneath our English word, "wiles."

Mark keenly, that this is the enemy's chief weapon. He doesn't fight in the open. He is a past master in lies, acted and spoken; all sorts of devilish deceit.

And it is quite striking to find that Paul plainly calls him "the devil." There is no squeamish beating about the bush here.

There is no vague rhetorical verbiage, more or less misty and indefinite and bewildering. The head of this enemy force is plainly spoken of as "*the* devil."

He is "diabolos," the evil slanderer, the lying deceitful arrogant incorrigible relentless merciless enemy of man. This old strategist has no question at all, and permits none, about the personality of this foul spirit prince.

This is item two in this great prayer paragraph. The enemy is put out in the clear. This is great strategy. Recognition of a problem is half its solution, and the first half. Getting our enemy out, clear and sharp, is the beginning of his defeat, our victory. It cuts straight across his chief strategy—deceit.

How to Fight.

Then comes the third thing, a big thing, *how to fight.* It is a simple, clear, graphic description of the victorious fighter in this warfare. And this is by far the bigger part of the entire paragraph.

In reading this description one keeps in mind that it is *prayer* Paul is talking about. Prayer is the climax of the entire passage. It helps much to keep clear that praying is fighting, spirit-fighting, and that our fighting is to be done on our knees.

There is here a detailed description of a Roman soldier, fully equipped, all ready for the stiff action of battle. Under this language Paul speaks of our taking up the whole armour of God.

Six things are specified in the soldier's preparation. There's the snug trim girding of the garments about the waist and loins, and the feet well shod. These put one's person in fighting shape.

Then there are the four fighting pieces of armour. Three are for defense, breastplate and shield and helmet. The soldier must be well protected in action. And the sword is the one sufficient weapon for attack, and driving through against the foe.

Under this language is given the description of the prayer fighter. It is an intensely vivid and interesting description. Really it is telling us *how to pray.* It tells what shape the man is in who gets great answers to prayer.

The whole thing can be put very simply. There is to be a clear grasp of the truth of the Bible *for one's self.* There must be a clean strong consistent *life.* One's whole dependence is on the *sacrificial blood of Jesus.* This is the foundation of all, the sure footing.

There is *faith,* simple, strong, seasoned, un-

questioning faith, in Christ and his Word. There is a settled *assurance* of victory as the outcome of the prayer, the spirit conflict. And there is an intelligent practical understanding of the truth of the Bible *for others.*

The clear grasp of the truth of the old Book of God *for one's self,* this is a strong snug girding of one's loins for quick bold unhindered free action.

A pure consistent daily conduct of *life,* ruggedly true, above all pure, graciously gentle in contacts, but uncompromisingly rigid in all matters of moral principle, this is spoken of as the breastplate. Against it all attacks fail and fall utterly.

The seasoned, unquestioning, steady, unswerving *faith* in Jesus our Saviour and Lord, and in his Word, this is the shield against which all the sudden flaming fiery attacks of doubt fall off, and fall down, ineffective.

The absolute *assurance of victory* in the particular problem, the puzzling tangle, the haunting question, the precious life to be saved, this is the helmet guarding one's thinking and imagination against attack.

And an intelligent usable understanding of the essential truths of the Bible, available for needed *use with others,* this is the Sword. With this well in hand the Holy Spirit can use us in service with others.

Now, the immensely significant thing to note, just now, is, that Paul is not speaking of these things as necessary or desirable *in themselves.* They are, of course. One quickly recognizes here

simply the true follower of Christ in contact with his fellows.

But, for the moment, all this falls into second place. The things that are really first are named here as fitting one for one certain thing. And that thing is *prayer*. This is tremendous, simple, but absolutely pivotal.

The proper rhetorical finish of that long sentence should be "with all your fighting strength fighting." But Paul is splendidly intense. The rhetoric has served its purpose, and is dropped. The Roman soldier has helped make the issue clear, and he falls out of the march. He gets a leave of absence.

With an intensity, and practicality, that takes hold of one's heart, in the intense action of life to-day, Paul goes at once to the thing he is talking about. He says, "with all prayer and supplication praying." This equipment is to fit one for praying.

Spirit Fighting.

And this at once plunges us headlong into the fourth item, namely, *the fight itself*. First was getting clear that prayer is a fight, a warfare. The second was getting the enemy we fight in prayer, getting him out clear, boldly, definitely outlined. It is fixing the target for our shooting. Then comes the equipment for fighting, getting into good fighting shape.

All this is leading up to the chief thing, the fight itself. This prayer knot on the end is of vital interest. This is the bull's eye of the target. At last Paul has us gripped with the

one thing he's been driving at, from the first, in this sixth-chaptered Ephesian letter.

Now look at this *prayer knot* on the end of the hank of threads making up this prayer letter. "With-all-prayer-praying" practically means: Use all sorts of praying in your praying. And that is language that grows out of the very thick of life.

All sorts of praying, communion or fellowship, petition for one's own needs, intercession on behalf of others, habitual praying, emergency praying, the praying that is a continual mental attitude, the unspoken or wordless prayer, the prayer that goes up "on the fly" in the thick of the crowded street or gathering, the walking prayer, the prayer that breathes out with the rhythm of natural breathing.

And it sounds just like this man Paul, to add "and supplication." That's one of his intense words. It has in it, underneath, the heart-throb of need, of personal necessity. It is the word of one who knows well the feeling of some sore need, crowding in on every side, and thinks of others in like circumstance.

Seasonable Praying.

Then there is a word about the calendar of prayer, "praying *at all seasons.*" In the springtime of promise pray, gratefully, thankfully. You can feel the new life coming as you pray.

Through the seed-time, the careful cultivation, the weeding, the stirring of the soil, the fertilizing, the eager watching for new life to pip the surface of the human soil, pray.

In the springtime of promise, let the prayer be as steady as the round of the clock, the rhythm of the days, the distilling of the dew, the gentle falling of the small growing rain.

In the summertime of fruitage, still pray. With a heart full of praise, keep on praying. Guard the growths against the withering of too hot a sun, too cold a night, the blight of bad growths, the parasites. Prayer must never relax guard in the summer of fruitage.

And in the reaction of autumn, with the chill in the air, the less warmth and light of the sun, the lengthening shadows, still pray.

For autumn time, in the human soil, may mean a deeper digging in of the unseen roots, a softer finer colouring displacing the gaudier, a dropping off of not-good growths, *if* some one is quietly steadily praying. The apparent back-set may mean a deeper growth.

And in the winter time of blighted hopes, and frost-bitten plans, there's the greater need of prayer. The ice and cold and blasting wind can be overcome, and may be, and surely shall be.

For prayer can push up the calendar. And spring, a new springtime, is just a bit ahead. Steady there, when it's winter in your life and plans, pray.

There are fine growths going on under the snow. The heart of the earth is always warm under any wintered surface. Prayer can turn winter blight into new spring buds and bloom and fruitage.

Prayer is always seasonable. Even when it may be unseasonable, or out of season, in custom

or habit, by clock or rule, there's a rare tact that can make a season for prayer, in your heart, under your breath. At all seasons, even unseasonable seasons, it is still in season to do praying of some sort.

For praying is above seasons. It knows a higher law. It can change seasons, a winter to spring and a spring to full summer. So, at all seasons, pray.

And the same gracious word of caution comes in at the end, as at the beginning, of this paragraph. There, our boldness in action is as the Holy Spirit guides. The initiative is his. We go only as he leads.

Here, action in prayer is to be "in the Spirit." Still the initiative is his, and the steady continuance is from him, and the finish, too.

All prayer is suggested by him. The impulse to pray, that gentle drawing away to your knees in some quiet corner, that comes from him.

The inner thought of prayer in the thick of the crowd, that again is his hand touching the hidden springs.

We may well cultivate these promptings by quickly heeding them. The open Book, the shut-away corner, the bended knee, the habit of brooding over the open page, in all these simple ways we cultivate his gracious promptings.

So we learn to pray "in the Spirit." And we may be praying in the Spirit most when we are not thinking of him, at all. He leads us to the Book. He speaks to us of Jesus. He draws out our hearts in prayer. All this is his touch. So, we are praying "in the Spirit."

"Watch and Pray."

And "watching" is put in by this shrewd old prayer strategist. Our Lord coupled "watch" with "pray." These days one needs to learn to pray with one eye open, sometimes both. The eyes of the heart, the eyes of trained caution, need to be ever open.

We need to watch *against*. In the thick of traffic on the streets and roads one is constantly on the watch. It's dangerous to fall asleep at the wheel, maybe fatal. "Watch" is for the enemy, ever on the alert.

And we watch *for*, too. We watch for opportunity, for the first pipping of the human bud, the first pushing of the green of some circumstance up through snow and ice.

There is a rare vitality in the human soil we're concerned with so much. It's warm under the coldest reserve. Be on the watch *for* what you pray for.

And, steadily, unwaveringly, we watch that Man on the Throne, just through the upper blue there. Watch him. He is watching you. You watch him. The eyes may meet. They do meet in a common expectancy. They shall yet meet in glad recognition of the fulfillment of all prayed for. Carmel had a lookout. Don't forget that.

And, again, another great word is added, and it's a war word, too, a strategic word, "perseverance," "in *all* perseverance."

The man that doesn't know when he's whipped can't be whipped. He's unwhippable. No one can be defeated without his own consent. Never

consent to be defeated. Let the prayer, in expectancy, be "in all perseverance."

First of all be quite simply clear of your leading, the Spirit's gracious leading. In your heart, through his Word, through your mental processes, your common thinking things through, sometimes when you're not conscious of any special leading but simply doing the next thing —in all this he leads.

Be clear of that leading. Then persevere, insist, persist. Refuse to acknowledge defeat, and you never will need to. This is Elijah's "go again seven times." It is our Lord's word, "until seventy times seven."

It means constancy. It means the north star, about which all the stellar heavens revolve. It means the strength that can hold steady in any outrunning tide, or suction, or deadly undertow, and does.

And again that word "supplication" comes in. It joins hard and fast here to "perseverance." The intensity of the personal need, the intensity of your expectant prayer, is to be matched by the intensity, the steady intensity, of your waiting, your perseverance.

And the direct objective of the prayer makes it definite. It is for Christ's followers, "for all the saints," that they may understand, and hold true.

Prayer is so definite and personal. That long list of names at the end of the Romans letter gives light here, with the gracious personal touch to each.

Do you remember the simple bit told of

Hudson Taylor's reading that first chapter of First Chronicles? It was his custom to read the Bible through, by course. This chapter came in his regular course. It is simply a list of names, one long list of strange hard names.

And as he read, it did seem tiresome, monotonous. He sighed a bit, but kept on. Then bowing his head over the book, in his great simplicity he made a bit of prayer.

He had felt the need of a message, some warm enheartening message from the Word. And now, only this apparently endless list of names, names, nothing but names.

And as he was quietly bowed over the chapter of uninteresting names, in an inner voice, soft as Hermon's dews, vibrant as the tones of a clear resonant bell, the words were spoken, "*your* name is down, too"! Ah! the page of names flashed with a sweet soft clear light.

Pray for others, by name, "the saints," the separated ones. Our Lord did,[1] and in all likelihood does. The habit of earth would persist.

And there is the tender personal touch here, so frequent in this great human Paul. He asked them to remember him in their praying. He is in prison; true. But he is an ambassador, the ambassador extraordinary, plenipotentiary, to the whole outer Gentile world.

"*Stand*" as Victors.

There is one most significant word in this prayer epistle. It is in this knotted prayer paragraph. It is distinctively a war word, and as

[1] Luke 22:31–32.

distinctively a prayer word. So Paul understands it. So he uses it here.

It is the word "stand" with the variation of "withstand." Four times over it seemed literally to stand out on the page, in the rare significance of its meaning.

It is distinctively a fighting word. In its original meaning it has to do with literal fighting of physical forces. It is used in that sense here. It really has two meanings, or, rather, there are two stages to its meaning, the first stage, and then the advanced or final stage.

Its first meaning is to hold your position in battle against the enemy. No matter what happens, stand, hold steady, don't give an inch, don't yield your position by so much as the third of an arrow hair.

This is the meaning the first time it is used here. "Put on the whole armour of God that ye may be able to *stand* (hold your position) against the wiles of the devil."[1]

Its second meaning is yet more significant. It looks forward to the finish, to the day of victory, to the fact of victory.

Here, it means the *position* of one who has routed his foe. And so he remains on the field at the close of action as victor. He remains because he *is* victor. The defeated foe is either fleeing for his life, or he lies dead.

Now, it is very significant to mark keenly, that this is clearly the meaning in Paul's mind here. He deliberately goes from the first stage to the second, the victory stage.

[1] Ephesians 6:11.

"Take up the whole armour of God that ye may be able to *withstand* in the evil day (or the crisis day), and, (*and,*) *having done all to stand.*"

That is, when the crisis of action is on, in the sore problem one is dealing with, we are to take the position against the enemy, and hold it.

And the outcome, when all's done, when the action of battle is over, the outcome will be that we *stand as victors.* The enemy is defeated. He is either hopelessly out of action on the field, or dead, or he is fleeing in the distance for his life.

"Stand" here means that you remain as victor on the battlefield. You remain because you *are* victor. This is the simple clear meaning. There's the ring of victory in the very word, "stand."

There is a famous historical illustration of this. It gives both these meanings, the action meaning while the fighting is still on, and the victory meaning when the fighting is over.

It is the famous illustration of that terrific crisis battle of Waterloo. The Iron Duke, Wellington, and Napoleon were pitted against each other. As Napoleon set out from Paris he is reported to have said that he was going to measure himself against Wellington.

He recognized that it was strategist against strategist, brains against brains, will power against will power, strategy against strategy. And the day's close would tell which was the greater. It was a bit of his keenness that he sensed the situation, so accurately.

When the action of the battle had begun, and was well under way, Wellington was approached by a group of his officers. They respectfully intimated that they be advised of the main line of strategy he had mapped out.

Then, in the event of anything unfortunately happening to him personally, they would follow out the strategy he had planned.

And he is said to have replied that his strategy could be put into one word, and that word was "*stand.*"

He had carefully studied the ground of action long before that great day came. Now, he had skilfully chosen the position, and placed his various fighting units.

And the strategy was to hold the position. They were to stand, to hold steady, and never yield a hair's breadth. In the face of the hottest fire, and the most serious losses, they were to stand.

And so they did. Again and again, all through that terrific day, officers begged to be allowed to advance. "No; not yet; hold steady; hold; stand; stand." This was the repeated answer. This was the great strength of this great strategist.

And all the day long the French battered themselves to pieces, literally to pieces, against that immovable stone wall of Wellington's men.

No cunning move on Napoleon's part, no fierce assault, could make Wellington change his strategy, nor advance before the time he had set in his plans.

This is the first meaning of Paul's great word

here,—hold your position; take your stand, and hold it.

Then in the end of that Waterloo June day, in just the shrewdly-chosen nick of time, the order "Charge!" was given. This is the moment the famous artist chose for his famous painting.

And charge they did. And at the day's close, the battle's close, they *stood* on the field. The French couldn't stand. They were fleeing, what there was left of them. The emperor was fleeing on his white charger toward Paris.

This is the second meaning of the word Paul uses here. It is the final meaning. We *stand* because we are victors, in full possession of the field.

"Stand" means an outcome of victory. When all's done, in the crisis day, we remain on the field of action, for we are victors.

This old strategist is making clear that this is the outcome. It will be victory, with the flags in the breeze, the bands playing, and the victors singing.

Our hearts shall burst out, with a new present meaning, in the blessed old song, "Thanks be to God who (now) giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."[1]

This is the strategy of prayer. God and man join forces against the Evil One. When he is driven off, the gracious presence of the Holy Spirit brings the needed results.

This is the strategy of love. Love sets out to free men of the malignant power of the Evil One. And it does.

[1] I Corinthians 15: 57.

He is set free. His power of free choice now chooses only the right. The image in which he was created is restored. The strategy of love "never faileth."

This is the strategy of the Book. It begins with God and man in sweet fellowship in a garden of delight.

It closes with God and man in a yet fuller fellowship in a garden-city. The garden of God's planting, is made more, with the true culture of man's growth.

This is the gracious strategy of the Holy Spirit. He woos us into the quiet corner daily, with the Book.

He opens up its pages to our eyes, and opens the eyes of our understanding to see. So we come to understand. So we learn to pray, simply, intelligently, confidently, victoriously.

This is the strategy of Calvary, and the Third Morning After. The stinging defeat of Satan there, by our Lord Jesus, becomes a present stinging defeat for him in our lives, through our choice, and the power of the blood of Jesus.

Jesus, our blessed Lord Jesus, teach us, too, to pray, even as thou didst teach Paul.

Thou wast the master of prayer those human years, down here on the battlefield. Thou art the master of prayer, now, at the Father's right hand, ever interceding.

Thou didst make the Wilderness of critical temptation a place of prayer, and a place of vic-

tory, too, with the enemy "departed,"[1] *on the run.*

Thou didst begin Calvary with prayer among the Gethsemane trees. Thou didst make Calvary itself a mount of prayer, thy last breath there a prayer.

Thyself wast a prayer that Third Morning After, a triumphant victorious prayer, rising up out of death, through the rock of the tomb.

Thy presence now, at the Father's right hand, is a prayer, as thou dost watch us down here in the thick of conflict.

Blessed Jesus, Saviour, Victor, teach us, too, to pray, that we, too, may know the sweets of victory.

We ask for thy Name's sake, on the ground of thy precious blood shed. Amen.

[1] Luke 4:13.

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